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50¢/Free to Deployed Areas

Corps to eliminate tank battalions

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has decided it must eliminate its tank battalions and reduce its infantry and artillery units in 10 years as it converts its force to one more aligned with taking on potential adversaries such as China, the service announced Monday.

Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger

said in October that the Marine Corps is "not optimized for great competition. It is not optimized to support a naval campaign." The reality of the world has forced them to "throw out old assumptions and start fresh," he said at the time.

Since summer, the Marine Corps has undergone a review of its personnel, units and equipment to determine what type of forces the service will need to fight future battles.

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With eye toward future, Marines also plan to reduce ranks by 12,000, decrease artillery units in 10 years

Marines with 2nd Tank Battalion, 2D Marine Division participate in Exercise Trident Juncture 18 near Follid, Norway, in November 2018.

AVENI COPPA/U.S. Marine Corps



Army command in Europe imposes coronavirus curfew

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — One of the largest U.S. Army commands in Europe has placed thousands of soldiers, family members, civilians and contractors within its area of responsibility under a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew, in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The curfew, believed to be the first imposed on defense personnel and their families in Europe because of the pandemic, was included in

a general order signed Monday by Maj. Gen. Christopher O. Mohan, commander of the Kaiserslautern-based 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

"Here's the bottom line," Mohan said in a video announcing the curfew and other, tighter restrictions. "If you're not at work, at a doctor's appointment, picking up groceries, getting gas or picking up food from some limited takeout facilities, you need to be at home. From 2200 to 0500, we need you either at work or at home."

The order applies to commands on installations

within the 21st TSC's footprint, a spokesman for the command said Tuesday. Mohan is the senior officer for Army installations within U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, Kosovo, Romania and Bulgaria.

People can go out at night for three reasons only — official travel, medical emergencies and pet care, Mohan said.

Troops found violating the order could face administrative action or punishment under the

■ UN finds 85% of new coronavirus cases are in US, Europe

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MILITARY

USAF suspends Space-A travel for many flyers

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Air Force has curtailed space-available travel, the type of low-cost air travel available to service members, their families, civilian employees and retirees, to limit the spread of coronavirus. Air Mobility Command announced Sunday.

The suspension remains in effect through May 11. Space-A travel is still available to certain categories of travelers, including service members and their families on emergency leave and wounded warriors, according to the announcement.

“Our focus remains on force health protection, and this temporary suspension of Space-A travel represents a sensible course of action to increase force health protection measures, while simultaneously decreasing risk to mission from COVID-19,” said Ellen Lord, undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, in a statement.

Space-available allows eligible travel aboard military and contractor cargo and passenger air-

craft at low or no cost. Space-A is never guaranteed.

For those still eligible for Space-A, the Air Mobility Command has suspended pillow and blanket service, along with providing hot towels. It recommends passengers bring those items. Also, passengers may be subject to medical screening.

A detailed list of eligible traveler status and circumstances is available at the Air Mobility Command website.

Travel restrictions and advisories from separate wings of the U.S. government leave service members, their families, Defense Department civilians and Americans in general with shrinking travel options, anyway. Travel curbs are meant to curtail the coronavirus pandemic, which has sickened more than 330,000 people and killed more than 14,500 worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

The Defense Department has curtailed all but essential travel, with some exceptions, for service members and DOD civilian employees, putting permanent changes of station and travel for temporary duty on hold until May 11.



GABRIELLE SPALDING/U.S. Air Force

A Patriot Express flyer retrieves his luggage inside the passenger terminal at Yokota Air Base, Japan, in 2018. The Air Force has temporarily suspended space-available travel to some to help limit the spread of coronavirus.

“Our focus remains on force health protection, and this temporary suspension of Space-A travel represents a sensible course of action to increase force health protection measures.”

Ellen Lord
undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment

For all military, DOD civilians and their families, the Defense Department has also banned travel to, from or through areas under a level 3 travel advisory by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That designation Tuesday included areas where the U.S. has some of its largest concentrations of overseas troops:

South Korea, Japan, Great Britain, Turkey and the continent of Europe in general.

Thursday, the U.S. State Department threw out a blanket “do not travel” advisory, cautioning Americans to avoid international travel altogether or if already abroad to return home immediately.

Japan on Monday imposed travel restrictions starting Thursday on anyone arriving from the United States. Those travelers must self-isolate for two weeks upon arrival to avoid the spread of coronavirus.

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US troops stay at southern border as coronavirus spreads elsewhere

By MOLLY O'TOOLE
Los Angeles Times

The United States is in a state of emergency, with thousands of active-duty military and National Guard troops deployed — and not because of the coronavirus.

Under the “national emergency” President Donald Trump declared in February 2019, roughly 5,200 troops remain at the U.S. southern border to assist in detecting undocumented migrants, though apprehensions are at the lowest levels in years. While other National Guard and military units respond to the rapidly spreading virus, the troops at the border are authorized to stay there through Sept. 30, according to the Defense Department.

The Pentagon “has no plans to pull units off the border for coronavirus response,” Lt. Col. Chris Mitchell told the Los Angeles Times in a statement Monday.

The troops mainly perform services in support of government border agencies because federal law prohibits the U.S. military from domestic law enforcement activities. Reports of some troops’ duties — including, at one point, painting a border barrier “to improve the aesthetic appearance of the wall” — have led to criticism from lawmakers and former officials that the military is being used for the president’s political agenda.

David Lapan, formerly an official at the Defense and Homeland Security departments and now a

vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said that in a department as large as the Pentagon, the border deployment isn’t likely to inhibit its ability to help against the pandemic.

“But,” Lapan wrote in an email to the Times, “the larger issue is the absence of a real mission at the (southwest) border because apprehensions have steadily decreased and new coronavirus measures taken by the administration are further restricting movements across the border.”

Last week, the administration halted most traffic at the border, restricting all nonessential travel to try to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Though the U.S. has far more confirmed cases of infection than Mexico or countries farther south, the Homeland Security Department said it will block almost all migrants from entering, whether at an official point of entry or elsewhere, and will return them to Mexico or their country of origin.

Lapan added that the troops and military funding “could be put to better use in responding to coronavirus as well as to true national security threats.”

Trump’s declaration of a border emergency last year was part of his fight with Congress over funding for his proposed wall, a showdown that led to the longest partial government shutdown in U.S. history. Since then, the administration has diverted about \$15 billion from military accounts and other federal funding for border barrier work, according to a March 13 status report by Customs and Border Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers.

COVID-19 ruled out in death of soldier found in barracks in S. Korea

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A combat engineer with the 2nd Infantry Division sustainment brigade was found dead in her barracks at

Camp Humphreys, the military said Tuesday. An official said coronavirus had been ruled out as the cause.

Pvt. 1st Class Marissa Jo Gloria, 25, of Moorhead, Minn.,

was pronounced dead at the scene by emergency medical personnel after she was found unresponsive Saturday, according to the 2nd Infantry Division.

It said the death was under investigation. A 2nd ID spokesman, however, took the unusual step of

ruling out any links to the coronavirus before the investigation was complete because of high concern over the global pandemic.

“There was no illness, and she did not present any COVID-19 related symptoms,” Lt. Col. Martyn Crighton told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

Gloria joined the Army from Fargo, N.D., in January 2019. She was assigned to the sustainment brigade after completing training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and arrived at Camp Humphreys last April, a press release said.

Lt. Col. Robert Dion, commander of the brigade’s 11th Engineer Battalion, expressed condolences.

“Marissa was a key member of the Jungle Cats Battalion,” he said. “We are all deeply saddened by the loss and will keep her family in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.”

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Gloria

WAR/MIDEAST



JON GAMBRELL/AP

U.S. Marines walk down a removable Trident Pier leading to an American ship docked near an Emirati military base in al-Hamra, United Arab Emirates, on Monday. U.S. Marines and Emirati forces held the biennial exercise, Native Fury, amid tensions with Iran and despite the global new coronavirus pandemic.

US, UAE troops hold exercise amid pandemic, Iran tensions

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

AL-HAMRA MILITARY BASE, United Arab Emirates — U.S. Marines and Emirati forces held a major military exercise Monday that saw forces seize a sprawling model Mideast city, a drill conducted amid tensions with Iran and despite the new coronavirus pandemic.

Troops raced over the dunes of the Al-Hamra Military Base to take the model city, complete with multistory buildings, an airport control tower, an oil refinery and a central mosque. Controlled explosions rang out as Emirati troops rappelled from hovering helicopters and Marines searched narrow streets on the Persian Gulf for "enemy" forces.

The biennial exercise, called Native Fury, shows the close ties between American forces and the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula home to Abu Dhabi, the capital, and Dubai, its financial heart.

It also comes after the U.S. killed Iran's most prominent general in a drone strike in January, and Tehran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack on American forces in Iraq. While acknowledging the tensions, U.S. officials dismissed the idea of Tehran viewing such an exercise with suspicion, only some 185 miles from its shores.

"Provocative? I don't know," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Savage of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, the ranking U.S. commander at the event. "We're about

stability in the region. So if they view it as provocative, well, that's up to them. This is just a normal training exercise for us."

The exercise saw 4,000 U.S. troops from the Army, Marines and Navy position armored vehicles and other equipment from Kuwait and the island of Diego Garcia in al-Hamra using a portable pier system. The barren desert, some 125 miles southwest of Abu Dhabi, is home to the UAE's vast oil reserves as well as its new Barakah nuclear power plant.

The combined U.S. forces and the Emirati troops then stormed the imaginary city of al-Hamra, whose blocks of stand-alone houses, hotels and apartment complexes include an unfinished gas station with a sign for the fast-food chicken restaurant Popeyes on it.

While the gunplay included mostly blanks, the practice remains deadly serious for the UAE, which has spent billions on its military — including the Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters that circled overhead, the armored carriers that splashed into the city's canals and the facility itself. The UAE deployed forces into Afghanistan after the 2001 U.S. invasion targeting al-Qaida following the 9/11 attacks. Its day-to-day ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has sought to project Emirati military power in the Mideast and into East Africa as well.

That military push has included taking part in the long-running Saudi-led war in Yemen,

which has seen sexual abuse at a UAE-controlled prison and the Emirates paying off members of al-Qaida's local branch there. The UAE since has pulled its troops out of Yemen, calling for a political settlement to end a conflict between the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels there and its Saudi-backed, internationally recognized government.

Emirati military officials at the base in al-Hamra on Monday declined to speak to Associated Press journalists. U.S. Ambassador John Rakolta Jr., on hand for the event, praised the UAE.

"Partnerships are based on many aspects, many fundamentals, and this happens just one of them," he said when asked about Yemen. "Trust is a huge, huge factor. Transparency, common values all work into a partnership."

Rakolta also described the exercise as "defensive in nature" when asked about Iran.

"I don't believe that they're intended to demonstrate a provocative act to the Iranians to say we're coming," he said. "Rather, we're protecting ourselves and we want to sit down at the conference table and negotiate a lasting peace settlement."

There was no immediate reaction in Iranian state media.

Also a concern is the ongoing outbreak of the new coronavirus. Rakolta said no U.S. diplomat in the UAE had contracted the virus. Savage said those U.S. forces involved had had little contact with the outside world after shipping out for the event and none had tested positive since.

US vows to cut aid if infighting ruins Afghan pact

By KATHY GANNON
AND RAHIM FAIEZ
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Washington's unprecedented threat to cut \$1 billion in Afghanistan funding — a response to the refusal of rivals in Kabul to work together to advance peace — comes at a time when the impoverished nation risks being overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic.

On Tuesday both President Ashraf Ghani and his rival, former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, blamed one another for failing to resolve the feud, which prompted U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to threaten the massive funding cut.

Pompeo called out the two leaders as he ended a rushed visit to Afghanistan on Monday, defying a near-global travel ban because of the virus. He left Kabul without being able to secure a power-sharing deal.

Ghani told the nation in a televised address that Abdullah's power-sharing demands were unconstitutional. For his part, Abdullah said Pompeo's visit was a missed opportunity.

Pompeo said the Trump administration would slash \$1 billion in assistance to Afghanistan and reduce all cooperation unless Ghani and Abdullah agree on forming a new government.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane on the return flight home, Pompeo said he was hopeful the two rivals "will get their act together and we won't have to" cut the assistance.

"But we're prepared to do that," he said.

Earlier, he said Ghani and Abdullah's "leadership failure poses a direct threat to U.S. national interests." Apart from reducing assistance by \$1 billion this year, another \$1 billion will be cut in 2021 if the bickering continued, Pompeo said.

Ghani seemed unfazed, though his government covers barely 25% of its budget, according to John Sopko, the U.S. Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. More than 75% of all expenses, including the running of government ministries, is covered by the international community.

Sopko's regular reports have also criticized the Afghan government for widespread corruption and Transparency International has ranked Afghanistan among the most corrupt at 173 out of 180 countries. The United States alone pays \$4 billion annually toward Afghanistan's security forces.

"I can assure you that the reduction of the U.S. assistance would not have a direct impact

on the system," Ghani said in his speech.

From Kabul, Pompeo flew to the Persian Gulf to meet with a leader of the Taliban, the Afghan insurgent group that last month signed a peace deal with the U.S. as a first step toward withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan by mid-2021.

As part of the deal, rival factions in Afghanistan were to come together in all-Afghan talks about shaping the country's future. However, Washington made clear from the start that the pace of a



Pompeo

on the success of intra-Afghan talks.

Ghani and Abdullah, his main rival in last September's disputed presidential polls, have been waging a bitter power struggle that has seen both men declare themselves president in competing inauguration ceremonies earlier this month.

After meeting chief Taliban negotiator Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Qatar, Pompeo told reporters he was satisfied the Taliban were keeping their side of the deal, had reduced violence and were ready to start negotiations with the leadership in Kabul.

In an English-language statement Tuesday, the Taliban said Baradar's meeting with Pompeo stressed that only a strict implementation of the peace deal would "pave the way for intra-Afghan negotiations along with enduring peace and cease-fire, including a future Islamic government in accordance with the agreement."

The squabbling between Ghani and Abdullah — both linked to powerful warlords, all with heavily armed militias — put a pall over the deal since its signing on Feb. 29.

While the rest of the world struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, Afghans have vented their frustrations on social networks and the scene over the government's lack of action.

Afghanistan has registered 74 cases of the virus though there are fears the true figure could be far greater after more than 137,000 Afghans have returned since the start of the year from Iran, the scene of the Middle East's largest outbreak.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Navy hospital in Japan processing tests

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Patients at Defense Department hospitals in Japan can expect quicker coronavirus results since Naval Hospital Yokosuka set up a lab last week to process tests, a U.S. Forces Japan official said Tuesday.

The lab at Yokosuka can provide results 5-6 hours after it receives the test, said Chief Master Sgt. Rick Winegardner, USFJ senior enlisted leader, during a virtual town hall with American Forces Network radio at Yokota Air Base.

Previously, base hospitals in Japan waited up to seven days for patient test results, the Yokosuka

hospital commander, Capt. Drew Bigby, said in a video on USFJ's Facebook page.

Tests were processed at Japanese hospitals, or flown to Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta or Naval Medical Center San Diego for processing, said Dr. Andrew Fisher, an Air Force major and the public health emergency officer at Yokota, earlier this month.

Yokosuka started processing those test samples "about a week ago," after specially trained medical staff were brought in to use specialized equipment, hospital spokeswoman Erika Figueroa told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

The capability should "dramatically increase the number

of tests we can do daily in Japan and will speed the results," USFJ spokeswoman Maj. Genevieve White wrote Friday in an email to Stars and Stripes.

As the number of infections rise in the U.S., hospitals there are "quickly getting overwhelmed with the amount of testing required," Winegardner said Tuesday. Processing tests in Yokosuka should help relieve some of that pressure.

Military hospitals in Japan have tested more than 100 service members, DOD civilians and families since testing began about six weeks ago, Winegardner said. As of Tuesday morning, none had tested positive.

Testing is not unlimited. Coronavirus tests are adminis-

tered after the subject has been screened and signed off by a physician.

The Yokosuka lab can process "a little under 40 tests a day — and that's coming from all over USFJ," Winegardner said.

"When somebody thinks they might have it or they're starting to exhibit symptoms, you are still going to call the doc," he said in the town hall. "The doc is going to say what protocols you'll need to do and then they will make the decision if you're going to come in and get tested."

Physicians use CDC guidelines to screen patients for testing, White wrote in her email.

"Symptoms are a factor in determining who to test for COVID-19," she said. "But as everyone

knows, symptoms that can result from a COVID-19 infection can also be caused by other viral infections, such as the common cold or influenza as well as other diseases."

To speed the screening process, the Yokosuka hospital on March 18 created a flu clinic to check patients with flu-like symptoms quickly.

"We have seen several benefits of launching the flu clinic, such as lessened wait times to be screened by a provider, reduced risk of exposure to other patients and staff and improved use of resources," Figueroa told Stars and Stripes in an email Monday.

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Japan imposes 14-day self-quarantine for travelers from US

By HANA KUSUMOTO
AND SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — New restrictions by the Japanese government on travelers entering the country from the United States will not further impact U.S. military personnel already under similar restrictions, according to U.S. Forces Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday said Japan will require all travelers entering from the U.S. to isolate themselves for 14 days upon arrival to stem the spread of coronavirus, now a global pandemic.

"We're not expecting this to have any effect on USFJ," Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Firman, a USFJ spokesman, said Tuesday. "Our policy toward our own personnel returning to Japan from anywhere in the world has already required this same level of restriction."

As of Monday, Japan has reported 1,089 cases of coronavirus and 41 deaths from the respiratory disease it causes, according to the World Health Organization.

Beginning Thursday, all travelers entering Japan from the U.S., including Japanese citizens, via aircraft and ships will be asked to self-quarantine at home or in other quarters, Abe said during a meeting at the Novel Coronavirus Response Headquarters in Tokyo. New arrivals will also be asked not to use public transpor-



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Travelers pass through a security checkpoint at Haneda International Airport in Tokyo on March 18.

tation, he said.

Department of Defense uniformed personnel, civilians and dependents traveling through Japan and other countries where the coronavirus is a significant risk have been ordered to stop movement until May 11, USFJ's official website states.

The stop movement order includes all official travel, including permanent changes of station,

travel for temporary duty and government-funded leave, according to the website.

Service members' personal leave and other non-official travel is included, as well.

Exceptions may be granted for mission-essential travel, humanitarian reasons or extreme hardship, the website states.

"At the conclusion of the 60 days, which began March 13,

2020, the DOD will reevaluate the stop movement policy and issue follow-on guidance, as necessary," USFJ states on its website.

Japan's new travel restrictions will be in place until the end of April and could be extended, Abe said.

They are intended "to be in line with efforts by other countries including the U.S. to further prevent worldwide spread of the in-

fection," he said.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website advises travelers to find a place they can stay during the 14-day self-quarantine and to find a means of transportation to that place before they arrive in Japan.

"We continue to monitor and analyze infection information from other countries and will not hesitate to take flexible border control measures," Abe said.

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Yokota child development center worker tests negative

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A child development center worker at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo has tested negative for the coronavirus, according to the 374th Airlift Wing.

Yokota's Yume Child Development Center has been closed since officials revealed last week

that the staff member would be screened for the virus.

"The CDC worker was cleared for not having COVID-19," officials said Tuesday on Yokota's official Facebook page. "We appreciate your patience as we work through this process to maintain the highest level of safety and care for our base."

The base announced Friday that the child care facility, which had been slated to reopen after

being cleaned and sanitized, would remain closed "until further notice" and that a reopening date was "actively being determined."

Officials also said at the time that "School Age Care" would close to align with the schedule of Defense Department schools in Japan, which will be shuttered through April 13 because of the virus.

A child and a staff member at a

child development center at Yokosuka Naval Base also tested negative for coronavirus last week.

Yokosuka's main child care center was cleared late Thursday to readmit children again Friday, Navy officials said last week. A second child development center at Ikego Housing Area was unaffected by the temporary shutdown.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Sigonella students strike a chord with online assignment

By JENNIFER SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Within days, an online assignment recorded by students at Sigonella Middle High School during the countrywide lockdown in Italy has resonated well beyond their small circle.

The choir students' a cappella performance of "Heavenly Father" by the indie folk band Bon Iver struck a strong emotional chord, particularly because the students are in Italy, where hundreds are dying daily from the new coronavirus.

Antone Leustek, the music teacher for seventh through 12th grade at the Department of Defense Education Activity school, edited and posted a video compilation of the students' individual recordings to the school's Facebook page over the weekend.

"The days keep us apart, but music brings us together," he captioned the video. "Stay strong Italy. Stay strong."

The video has reached more than 187,000 people and garnered nearly 2,000 comments from around the world, Leustek said.

"Love love love this, too, all the way from Seattle," one woman commented. "My granddaughter is one of these beautiful children. Sharing your gifts of music & hope in a time of uncertainty is so appreciated."

The students recorded the song for an assignment that aimed to get them ready for a concert in May, if school reopens by then, the teacher said.

The 15 students — many of them in middle school — had four days to film themselves and get a good take, Leustek said Monday from his home in Acı Trezza, where he's been conducting online music classes since the Sigonella school closed more than two weeks ago because of the virus.

Plugging their headphones into an online tool called SmartMusic that fills in the other parts of the



Facebook

Students from Sigonella Middle School recorded themselves singing an a cappella performance of "Heavenly Father" by the indie folk band Bon Iver as part of an online assignment while they are in a countrywide lockdown because of the coronavirus.

song, the students recorded themselves and uploaded their videos.

"Once I had all the files, I was like, 'Oh, let's see what it sounds like if I put it together,'" Leustek said.

The song's message, finding solace in a time of hardship, applies to the situation in Italy, he said.

"After I started putting things together, the way it started sounding, I was like, 'Wow ... it's one of those coincidental things that seem like fate.' We didn't know

it was going to be this powerful," Leustek said.

Freshman Calvin Crumbley, 14, carried the song's haunting solo.

"I didn't expect it to be that big, for it to blow up like that," Crumbley said. "I just want to give credit to my teacher for putting this all together and for my choirmates, for working hard and for us all getting it done."

Amanda Erno, 18, a junior, said the song "holds hope and brings the community together."

"I think it really showed everyone in our choir, that even though we're not together, we can still produce something that's amazing, and connect with so many people," she said.

Erno, who hasn't left her home in about two weeks, said taking online classes has been challenging. But as military kids, she said, "We're just adapting, which is something that we're super-used to."

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Belarus pushes on with drills

By SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

Belarus says it will launch a series of military drills in response to Defender-Europe 20, the U.S.-led exercise that was scaled back to such an extent over coronavirus concerns that even Moscow nixed its own counter-maneuvers.

Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin said an exercise including 6,000 personnel "will enable not only to assess the level of combat readiness, but is also one of the response measures to NATO's multinational maneuvers near our borders."

The announcement Monday came as a surprise because last week, the Pentagon ordered a halt to the deployment of forces for Defender, which would have been the U.S. Army's largest exercise on the Continent in 25 years.

Concerns over the coronavirus forced the U.S. military and its NATO allies to cancel major activities connected to the exercise, which was to include paratroopers dropping into the Republic of Georgia and defense maneuvers in the Baltic states.

Belarus also has at least 76 confirmed coronavirus cases, the World Health Organization reported Monday.



Belarus Ministry of Defense

Belarusian soldiers exit a Mi-8 helicopter during an undated drill.

The U.S. military had originally planned to send some 20,000 U.S.-based troops to Europe to join other American and allied forces for the drills. Ten NATO countries were also scheduled to participate.

On Monday, Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian military would also call off its own spring maneuvers.

The Russian war games were to have been a direct response to the U.S. drills, which the Kremlin has been criticizing since they were announced last year.

But Belarus, Russia's closest military ally, which borders NATO member Poland, decided not to follow suit despite indicating earlier this year that it wanted to forge closer ties with the Western military alliance.

In a statement on the defense ministry's website, Khrenin said that although the Defender exercises had been canceled for the time being, "the NATO leadership did not fully reject holding it."

NATO had no immediate comment Tuesday to the Belarusian announcement.

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Guam Navy hospital says it misreported 4 cases of coronavirus

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

A Navy hospital on Guam incorrectly reported four cases of coronavirus, a spokesman for Joint Region Marianas said in a statement Tuesday.

"Regrettably, the report of four confirmed COVID-19 cases at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam was made in error," said spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Rick Moore.

The statement did not specify when the report was made but the Guam Post on Tuesday reported four new positive cases, citing the hospital, according to the newspaper's website.

A hospital spokesman made the statement regarding four cases at a media briefing at the Guam governor's office, according to an updated report by the Guam Post. The hospital later said the report was an error.

The naval hospital sends its test samples to Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, according to the hospital, which did not apportion blame for the mistaken report.

No patients with confirmed cases of coronavirus are being

treated at the naval hospital, according to hospital commander Capt. Maria Young.

"We regret the confusion caused by this misreport," Young said, according to the hospital statement.

Young said two individuals associated with the Defense Department are isolated at home, after being tested previously by the Department of Public Health and Social Services and reported to civilian authorities. Young did not specify the results of those tests.

As of Monday, Guam had identified 29 cases of coronavirus on the island and one death related to the viral respiratory disease that is sweeping the globe, according to the Guam Civil Defense Office Joint Information Center.

Civil and military authorities on Guam have imposed a series of measures aimed at curbing the disease, including school closures, restricted activities on and access to military bases and reduced government services in the U.S. territory.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Coalition bases in Afghanistan confirm 4 cases

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Four service members in Afghanistan have tested positive for the coronavirus while being held in a screening facility after arriving in the country, military officials said Tuesday.

The four were isolated and tested after they showed symptoms of the disease caused by the virus. Officials were working to identify and quarantine anyone they might have been in contact with, NATO's Resolute Support mission said in a statement.

The nationalities of the service members and other details were being held pending approved release from "national authorities," Resolute Support said.

More than 16,000 troops from 39 countries are deployed as part of the mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces. About half are American. Thousands more U.S. service members are also deployed to the country under a separate counterterrorism mission, but the U.S. has begun drawing down its overall numbers to 8,600

troops.

About 1,500 Resolute Support military and civilian personnel, most of whom arrived in Afghanistan in recent weeks, are living in screening facilities as a precautionary measure. At least 38 people were exhibiting flu-like symptoms and were being treated in isolation, the statement said.

Resolute Support had also temporarily halted incoming personnel, it said last week, after announcing measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus, such as increased use of teleconferences to advise Afghan forces.

U.S. Central Command has since instituted a two-week quarantine for all U.S. and allied personnel before they deploy to the Middle East, to reduce potential strain on forward deployed medical facilities.

"Resolute Support is implementing every available control measure to prevent the spread of the virus," the statement said Tuesday. "We are closely monitoring, continually assessing and adjusting our operations so we can continue to protect our force."

The measures were taken after some U.S. lawmakers voiced concern that U.S. troops in Afghanistan were not properly protected from the pandemic, which has spread rapidly in neighboring countries. It shares a porous border with Iran, which has been among the countries hardest hit by the virus, leading thousands of Afghans to return home.

As of Tuesday, 74 Afghans in 12 provinces had been diagnosed with the virus, many after having recently traveled outside the country, health officials said. However, the only confirmed fatality from the disease was a 40-year-old man with no recent travel history.

Limited testing — fewer than 400 tests so far — could account for the relatively low number of confirmed cases, a United Nations report said Monday.

In light of the pandemic, Afghan and Taliban officials were expected to carry out a video call Tuesday to keep alive a fragile peace process. Last month, the U.S. and Taliban signed an agreement aimed at initiating internal Afghan peace talks and leading to the full withdrawal of foreign

forces by the end of summer 2021.

Perhaps a bigger threat to the talks than the virus, however, is the failure of the country's top leaders to settle a political spat over the results of a presidential election last fall, which has left the Kabul government divided.

Returning from a surprise visit to Kabul on Monday, after failing to persuade rival leaders President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to form a unified administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced \$1 billion in cuts to annual aid to the country, as well as a potential \$1 billion reduction next year, under a broader review of U.S. support. But Washington wasn't abandoning the country, Pompeo said.

"To illustrate America's steadfast commitment to the Afghan people, the United States will be providing \$15 million in assistance to help combat the spread of the coronavirus in Afghanistan," he said.

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Another USFK case spurs new restrictions

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — A U.S. military contractor working at Eighth Army headquarters on Camp Humphreys has tested positive for coronavirus, prompting new on-base restrictions to prevent complacency after more than a month of near confinement for members of the military community.

The latest infection — the 10th case linked to U.S. Forces Korea — underscored the community's vulnerability despite strict limitations on access and movement aimed at forming what commanders call "protective bubbles" to try to stop the coronavirus from spreading on bases across the divided peninsula.

Officials further tightened restrictions in a bid to prevent people from letting their guard down too soon as the overall pace of infections in South Korea has started to slow. Only 76 new cases were logged Tuesday, down from a high of 909 on Feb. 29. In total, 9,037 people have tested positive for the virus in the country.

The South Korean government also has launched a two-week campaign, strongly urging people to stay home except for work and other essential needs, and restricting religious gatherings, indoor sports and other activities.

New restrictions

Beginning Wednesday, on-post restaurants will be take-out only and chairs will be removed from the facilities to ensure compliance, Col. Michael Tremblay said, adding that no more group physical training will be allowed in the gyms.

"The complacency is very con-

cerning because what happens to one affects us all, so look for more measures in the upcoming days ... to ensure the protection of our force," he said during a Facebook live update.

Only one U.S. soldier has been infected with coronavirus in South Korea. Other cases were his wife, three other military dependents, four South Korean employees, and now, the military contractor.

The American patients are still under medical care but doing well. They are being tested to determine next steps, USFK spokesman Col. Lee Peters said.

The contractor was the second person at Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. base in South Korea, to be infected. The other nine were on bases in the southeastern city of Daegu and surrounding areas that were at the center of the outbreak in South Korea.

Most of the 37,000-plus Camp Humphreys community lives off-post, commanders noted. They pleaded with civilians to follow the same rules as service members, who are under orders to avoid off-post establishments. "I realize that we have no authority over government employees, contractors, dependents in order to enforce that, but I want to let you know that everyone's actions have implications," Tremblay said.

The infected contractor last visited Camp Humphreys on Friday and is in isolation at his off-base residence as directed by the Korea Centers for Disease Control, a press release said.

He became symptomatic on Saturday, was tested at a South Korean hospital on Monday and received the results Tuesday morning, Tremblay said.

After weeks of relying on South



MATTHEW KEELER/Stars and Stripes

People wearing masks wait for a public bus outside Camp Humphreys, South Korea, on March 16. A U.S. military contractor working at Camp Humphreys has tested positive for coronavirus, becoming the 10th case linked to U.S. Forces Korea.

Korea, USFK stood up its own testing laboratory on March 8 and had tested more than 300 people as of Monday. All were negative for the virus. But only Tricare beneficiaries — meaning service members and dependents — are eligible, USFK spokesman Col. Lee Peters said, explaining why the contractor was tested at a South Korean hospital.

Retracing movements

Officials used closed-circuit TV and electronic records to retrace the contractor's movements on post through Thursday. KCDC was doing the same outside the gates.

Tremblay outlined his movements in detail, urging anyone who may have been in his vicinity to go home and call the public health office (05033-372556) to help with the trace investigation and determine if they need to be

quarantined.

On Thursday, the contractor entered the installation shortly before 9 a.m., went to work at the Eighth Army headquarters, had lunch at a chicken restaurant in a nearby food court, then went back to work until leaving for home.

On Friday, he went to work about the same time, then drove to the golf course for lunch at the pub. He went from there to two other administrative buildings and had coffee at the Starbucks in an area known as Sentry Village.

The contractor, who lives in an apartment building near Pyeongtaek University, also visited an off-post convenience store and a restaurant near the Dongchangri gate, Tremblay said.

All locations have been thoroughly cleaned and people who had close contact with the individual were being sent home to self-quarantine, he added.

USFK, which commands some 28,500 service members in South Korea, has kept its number of infections relatively low compared with more than 9,000 confirmed cases elsewhere in South Korea, where the virus spread rapidly from China late last year.

Entry to bases in Korea has been largely limited to Americans and authorized South Korean employees, and service members have been barred from nonessential travel and outside social activities after the first case of coronavirus in the military community here was recorded in mid-February at U.S. Army Garrison Daegu.

But many activities inside the gates, such as sporting activities, church services, shopping and dining, have continued, albeit with strict social distancing guidelines.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK



JOHN MINICILLI/AP

Members of the New York National Guard stand in formation at the Jacob Javits Center on Monday in New York City.

US combats conspiracy theories on martial law

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department's response to the coronavirus outbreak has expanded to include not only the expected deployment of tens of thousands of National Guardsmen, but also a growing effort to stamp out conspiracy theories that the United States will adopt martial law.

Senior U.S. officials have addressed the issue in briefings, a Pentagon official rebutted speculative online posts and a new government website titled "Coronavirus Rumor Control" was established.

More than 8,000 National Guardsmen were on duty as of Monday to respond to the spread of the virus, with tasks ranging from delivering needed supplies to disinfecting public areas.

The chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Joseph Lengyel, said in a phone call with reporters Sunday night that he had "seen things on Facebook and the like" that depicted military equipment moving on trains and suggested the Guard was going to launch "some quarantine operation."

"There is just no truth to this rumor that people are considering, that governors are planning, that anybody is conspiring to use National Guard ... to do some sort of a military action to enforce, you know, shelter in place and quarantine," Lengyel said. "I don't know how to say that any more clearly than that."

The Guard has legal authorities to participate in law enforcement operations, such as crowd control but usually does so under the supervision of local police, Lengyel said. He left open the possibility that Guardsmen also could take on other missions at the request of local authorities, including stocking shelves in grocery stores if the food supply chain fails.

In tweets, Lengyel said that the use of Title 32 status "is a win for all involved" and "no different than when the National Guard responds to natural disasters."

"Governors and adjutants general, who know best what is needed on the ground, will continue to command Guardsmen and women and use them where they are needed most," he wrote. "Just as important, the status change also ensures states will be reimbursed by the federal government."

The discussion is sensitive in a country where martial law has rarely been declared, and has sometimes prompted regrets later, said Phillip Carter, a retired Army officer and analyst with the Rand Corp. who studies civil-military relations. He cited the creation of internment camps, the forced relocation of Japanese-Americans and the enforcement of curfews on the West Coast during World War II as examples.

Each state and U.S. territory has its own National Guard, and it is often activated by governors under state orders to handle missions during blizzards, hurricanes and flooding. Unlike active-duty forces, Guardsmen usually also have civilian jobs, joining drills to sharpen military skills monthly and attending annual training that is about two weeks long.

Guardsmen can be "federalized" under Title 10 of federal law to carry out missions ordered by the president, but commanders in chief have historically only done so in times of crisis. Examples include president Dwight D. Eisenhower federalizing the Arkansas National Guard to protect black students who were desegregating a high school in Little Rock in 1957 and President Lyndon B. Johnson ordering the Alabama National Guard to protect a civil rights march in 1965. In more recent years, National Guard units were activated and sent to the southern border under presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Trump under Title 32 status. That allowed some governors to order Guardsmen from their states back home last year when they determined that there was insufficient cause for them to be there.

Historically, activating Guardsmen under Title 32 status has not been controversial because the governors retain control in similar fashion to if the Guardsmen were on state orders, said Steve Vladeck, a constitutional lawyer and professor at the University of Texas School of Law.

A fundamental misunderstanding that many people have about domestic use of the military is that it is always tantamount to martial law, Vladeck said.

"Martial law is the extreme case where there is no functioning civil authority," he said. "It's not the regular case, where the military is supplementing civil authority."

That hasn't stopped rumors from persisting, especially online.

FEMA's website now includes a page that calls the national lockdown rumor a myth and urges citizens to verify the source of information they share.

In one case last week, an economist, Jim Bianco, posted a video of armored vehicles traveling by train, saying that it was recorded on a line north of Chicago and was heading east.

"Coming soon," Bianco asked vaguely, prompting a backlash from some veterans and responses from others who worried what it meant.

The Pentagon's top spokesman, Jonathan Rath Hoffman, tweeted Bianco's video Saturday and wrote that it was a shipment of new Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, which are made in Oshkosh, Wis. They were traveling to Fort Bragg, N.C., Hoffman wrote.

"These deliveries by train to our bases nationwide are not infrequent and have nothing to do with COVID-19," Hoffman tweeted.

Bianco, reached by email, said that he was "glad the real reason was cleared up," but that his tweet was referring only to the expected activation of more National Guardsmen, something he called "necessary evil."

"No regrets," he wrote. "I posted an accurate video."

More than 8,000 National Guard members deployed

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

More than 8,000 members of the National Guard, including some through federal funding, are working in all 50 states and four U.S. territories to help control the spreading coronavirus pandemic, which has now infected more than 41,500 Americans, the National Guard Bureau reported Monday.

President Donald Trump announced Sunday that National Guard members activated in California, New York and Washington are deployed under a federal status known as Title 32, which allows governors to continue to have control of the troops with funding from the federal government.

"In this case, it was the governors who asked the president for the authorization to do this," Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, said during a Sunday evening news conference. Governors and adjutants general know what the needs are in their states, he said.

The authorization will "help with unity and speed of response," Lengyel said, likening the coronavirus to a hurricane hitting all 54 states and territories at once.

Activating the National Guard costs about \$8 to \$9 million per 1,000 service members, depending on how many troops are activated and the duration of their duty, Lengyel said.

"Frankly, that's one reason that this speeds the response for the states. States aren't used to disasters that last this long," he said.

The federal status also helps the troops deployed in those states, because it makes them eligible for Tricare health insurance, education benefits and adds to their retirements, Lengyel said.

States with the largest number of activated troops include New York with 1,800, Maryland with more than 1,500 and Florida with 1,062.

In Florida, where there are more than 1,170 coronavirus cases, troops are helping at community-based testing sites in Broward, Orange and Miami-Dade counties, said 1st Lt. Tahisha Coleman, spokeswoman for the Florida National Guard. The Broward County site has seen more than 2,000 patients since it opened. Troops will conduct rehearsals and operational checks in Orange County where the site is set to open Wednesday, Coleman said. Development of an additional testing site at Miami's baseball stadium, Marlins Park, will be initiated in the coming days.

New York troops are working at drive-thru test swabs in Long Island, Staten Island, the Bronx

and in Rockland and Westchester counties, said Col. Richard Goldenberg, spokesman for the New York National Guard. These sites supported testing, which is done with a doctor's order, for more than 3,000 people Sunday.

New York is the state with the highest number of coronavirus cases, topping 20,000 as of Monday, according to Gov. Andrew Cuomo. More than half of those cases are in New York City.

Joint task forces have continued operating on Long Island, in New York City and the Hudson Valley and Albany areas in support of state, county and local governments, with two additional units now running in Syracuse and Buffalo.

The Maryland National Guard and Maryland Department of Health continue collaborating with Prince George's County for the establishment of a pilot health screening location at FedEx Field in Landover, said Maj. Kurt Rauschenberg, spokesman for the Maryland National Guard. In conjunction with the Maryland State Police, troops will also be assisting Baltimore City with food distribution while supporting state agencies with supply distribution at the Strategic National Stockpile.

Maryland has 288 confirmed cases of the virus, according to the state's health department.

"This truly is a neighbors-helping-neighbors situation and the exact reason why so many of us joined the Maryland National Guard," Rauschenberg said. "Marylanders should know that we'll have their backs throughout this crisis. We're in this together, we'll get through this together."

Louisiana, a state where the department of health reported that the number of coronavirus cases has jumped to more than 1,100 during the weekend, has activated more than 500 soldiers and airmen to help at testing sites, primarily in the New Orleans area, according to a news release from the Louisiana National Guard. Across the state, troops are also providing medical support, engineering assessment support, shelter security and liaison officer teams to emergency operations centers.

National Guard members are conducting a wide variety of other missions across the country, Lengyel said. He made it clear, however, that there are no plans for troops to enforce quarantines, though the National Guard maintains its ability to conduct law enforcement activities under a Title 32 or state-duty status.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK



CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes

Only a handful of customers are seen outside a popular cafe in the pedestrian zone in Kaiserslautern, Germany, at night.

Curfew: Strict rules in place to curb epidemic spread in Army bases throughout Europe

FROM FRONT PAGE

Uniform Code of Military Justice, the order said.

Those who don't fall under the UCMJ who violate the order could lose logistical support, access to government housing, be banned from entering U.S. installations or be ordered to return to the U.S., the order said.

The order also bars soldiers living on and off base from traveling more than 18.6 miles from their residence unless they're going to work or another military installation, a grocery store, medical appointment, pharmacy, bank, maintaining or fueling a vehicle, picking up takeout food or doing laundry.

Outdoor exercise is authorized within the same radius outside curfew hours, as long as it is conducted away from areas with a lot of people and either alone or with household members.

Soldiers living in barracks must "generally remain in their room or shared barracks suite," but may leave "for the same reasons, to go to the same places" — grocery stores, banks and the like, it said.

Only the residents may be inside a barracks room or suite, and social distancing must be observed in communal areas, it said.

Laundry machines must be sanitized by soldiers after each use. Block parties are out, the order said.

Extra patrols on base or in neighborhoods won't be called on to enforce the general order, said Master Sgt. Dan Bailey, a 21st TSC spokesman, but if "you were to get caught and something

were to occur, you could be held accountable.

"We expect our personnel to do what's right," he said. "This is about trying to protect our people, keep them safe and healthy ... and ultimately, we'll hopefully flatten the curve."

Other commanders in Europe have issued similar general orders, but none, either in the Army or Air Force, have included curfews.

"This new order is not something that I like doing," Mohan said in the video message, in which he outlined the "cold, hard facts" that prompted the order.

"In the last seven days, we've watched confirmed cases in Germany go from 7,000 to 24,800 as of this morning," Mohan said. "Here in Rheinland-Pfalz, we've watched cases go from 200 to 1,100 over the last seven days alone."

"We're working hard to fight this virus. The key to fighting this virus, though, is to maintain ... strict discipline and social distancing."

Mohan's order follows new restrictions announced by German Chancellor Angela Merkel Sunday to fight the coronavirus, including limiting public gatherings to two people unless they are part of the same household, and the closure of nonessential services such as libraries, barber shops and beauty salons.

Shortly after she announced the tougher restrictions, Merkel quarantined herself after learning that one of her doctors had tested positive for the virus.

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Top general warns of 'social breakdowns' internationally

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus crisis is likely to last at least several months in the United States and could cause political discord elsewhere, the U.S. military's top general warned Tuesday as Defense Department-related illnesses eclipsed 300 worldwide.

Government forecasts predict that the coronavirus will continue to spread throughout the U.S. for roughly three months based on its impacts on other nations, said Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He and Defense Secretary Mark Esper urged the U.S. military community to prepare to take health protection measures, which could include social distancing, possibly into the summer months.

"You're looking at probably late May, June, maybe something as late as July," Milley said during a virtual town hall broadcast with Esper from the Pentagon. "But we will get through it. It's not a question of when. We will get through it, and we'll pull together as a country and a military and we ... will do whatever is required to defeat the people of the United States."

The Pentagon also announced Tuesday that 340 individuals linked to the Defense Department throughout the world had tested positive for COVID-19, an increase of 91 cases since Monday. The cases included 191 service members, of which 17 had recovered as of Tuesday. Nine troops across the force were hospitalized by the virus on Tuesday, the Pentagon said.

The town hall briefing came one day after Esper upgraded the "health protection condition" for the Pentagon, increasing it to HPCON Charlie as dozens of other installations across the U.S.

had already done. For the Pentagon, the increase to the second-highest health threat level meant the closing of several entrances to the military's Arlington, Va. headquarters and limiting building access almost exclusively to those individuals — civilian and military — deemed mission essential.

Esper said Tuesday that Pentagon employees who can work from home should be prepared to do so for the foreseeable future. He urged supervisors and commanders to allow their subordinates to telework as long as the crisis continued. He previously said that more than 60% of the Pentagon workforce had been teleworking since last week.

"I think we need to plan for this to be a few months long, at least. We're taking all precautionary measures to do that — to be in it for the long haul," Esper said. "We're going to telework as long as necessary to ensure we are beyond the coronavirus crisis ... as much as possible so we can protect our people while performing our mission."

Both of the top Pentagon officials downplayed the impact the virus could have to the military's combat readiness. Some training for troops has continued, including most home-station training and major deployment preparation operations. Services have scaled back or completely canceled some training exercises, however.

Those decisions will have some impact on combat readiness, Milley said, but he expected that they would be minor in scale.

The general said that what worries him are the impacts the virus could have across the globe on the security and economic spectrums. These have the potential to alter the landscape for the U.S. military, which has spent nearly two decades focused on counterterrorism and is in the process of

preparing primarily for potential fights against key power rivals, namely China and Russia.

"This is effecting different countries differently, and it depends on the level of rigor and the robustness of medical facilities, capacity inside each country," Milley said. "It could, in some cases, lead to social breakdowns. It could lead to political chaos in certain countries. We have to be attuned to that."

Among his concerns are issues with resources needed to combat the virus, personal protective equipment such as masks are in short supply in the U.S. and in other nations. Other critical components to responding to the coronavirus such as ventilators and hospital bed space are scarce not only in the U.S., but also in nations all across the globe.

"These can have severe international consequences to certain countries that go well beyond the immediate medical issues," Milley said, warning of the potential for uprisings without specifying what nations most concerned him.

Esper said that such an issue could cause U.S. political rivals and military adversaries to react in ways that they might not under normal conditions. Iran, for example, has been struck hard by the virus with more than 21,000 confirmed cases and 1,685 deaths as of Monday, according to World Health Organization statistics.

The defense secretary urged commanders to stay vigilant across the globe for new threats.

"With potential adversaries or adversaries [the coronavirus outbreak] may cause them to act out in different ways that impact our security posture," Esper said. "We need to be very conscious, on the lookout for that, as this unfolds."

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New Orleans has one-third of VA's cases

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in New Orleans reported Monday that it had 65 patients who tested positive for the coronavirus — about 31% of the total number of cases it was tracking nationwide.

The VA had 204 cases across 50 locations Monday. Behind New Orleans, the locations with the most cases were Atlanta with 17, and New York City with 10.

A spokesman for the New Orleans VA Medical Center said that it was unclear why the facility had so many more patients than other VA hospitals.

"We have seen a higher number

of positive cases than other VA facilities, but we cannot speculate as to why at this point," said Phil Walls, a public affairs specialist at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Medical Care System.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie held a phone call with veterans organizations Sunday. Wilkie told the groups that he had sent teams of medical professionals to help with the pandemic response in New York City. He was preparing to send more to New Orleans, said Joe Chenelly, national executive director of AMVETS, who was on the call.

Health officials in Louisiana said Monday that there were 1,172 cases of the coronavirus

in the state, 567 of them in New Orleans. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a stay-at-home order, effective Monday.

The state had counted 34 deaths from the virus Monday. No deaths had been reported at the New Orleans VA.

Of the 65 coronavirus patients at the New Orleans VA, 44 were admitted to the hospital. Others — including the first veteran diagnosed at the New Orleans facility — have been discharged and returned home to recover, Walls said. He described the pandemic response as an "unprecedented challenge."

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Congress close to \$2 trillion aid package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top congressional and White House officials said they expected to reach a deal Tuesday on a nearly \$2 trillion measure aimed at easing the economic damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and congressional leaders engaged in final negotiations after a tumultuous but productive day on Monday. While the two sides have resolved many issues in the sweeping package, some final sticking points remained at press time.

Ravaged in recent days, stocks climbed as negotiators signaled a resolution was in sight.

At issue is an unprecedented economic rescue package that would give direct payments to most Americans, expanded unemployment benefits, and a \$350 billion program for small businesses to keep making payroll while workers are forced to stay home. A point of contention has been \$500 billion for guaranteed loans to larger industries.

The one-time rebates are about \$1,200 per person, or \$3,000 for a family of four.

Hospitals could get up to \$200 billion for the expected influx of sick patients, said Mnuchin.

Opening the Senate on Tuesday, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell combined optimism about the chances for a deal with frustration at the delays — and a

sober view of the crisis at hand.

"The urgency and the gravity of this moment cannot be lost on anyone," he said. "It's the most serious threat to Americans' health in over a century and quite likely the greatest risk to America's jobs and prosperity that we've seen since the Great Depression."

On the negotiations, he said: "It's taken a lot of noise and a lot of rhetoric to get us here." Still, "we are very close. We are close to a bill that takes our bold Republican framework, integrates further ideas from both parties, and delivers huge progress."

Earlier Tuesday, Trump urged swift action. "Congress must approve the deal, without all of the nonsense, today," he tweeted. "The longer it takes, the harder it will be to start up our economy."

Democrats pointed to gains for hospitals, additional oversight of the huge industry stabilization fund, and money for cash-strapped states. A companion appropriations package ballooned as well, growing from a \$46 billion White House proposal to an unprecedented \$300 billion, including a late \$25 billion White House request for a flexible disaster response fund.

The sense of optimism extended to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who told CNBC: "I think there is real optimism that we could get something done in the next few hours." Only Monday, Pelosi introduced a massive Democratic measure with liberal



BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

A man leaves a Trader Joe's grocery store in Pembroke Pines, Fla. Congress was closing in on a nearly \$2 trillion aid package on Tuesday, aimed at easing the economic damage caused by the coronavirus.

'The urgency and the gravity of this moment cannot be lost on anyone.'

Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader

priorities, drawing scorn from Republicans.

The long evening of shuttle negotiations came after a long day trying to close the deal. The package is a far-reaching effort to prop up the U.S. economy, help American households and bolster the health care system in the growing crisis. Senate passage would send the legislation to the House.

Tensions had flared Monday as Washington strained to respond to the worsening coronavirus outbreak, with Congress arguing over the huge rescue package

and an impatient Trump musing openly about letting the 15-day shutdown expire March 30.

As the U.S. braces for an onslaught of sick Americans, and millions are forced indoors to avert a spike that risks overwhelming hospitals, the most ambitious federal intervention in modern times is testing whether Washington can act swiftly to deal with the pandemic on the home front.

Pelosi assailed Trump's idea to trim social distancing guidelines and fluctuating response to the crisis.

"He's a notion-monger, just tossing out things that have no relationship to a well-coordinated, science-based, governmentwide response to this," Pelosi said on a health care conference call Monday. "Thank God for the governors who are taking the lead in their state. Thank God for some of the people in the administration who speak truth to power."

With a wary population watching and waiting, Washington labored under the size and scope of a rescue package — larger than the 2008 bank bailout and 2009 recovery act combined.

Trump has balked at using his authority under the recently invoked Defense Protection Act to compel the private sector to manufacture needed medical supplies like masks and ventilators.

Trump weighs scaling back social distancing guidelines

Associated Press



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Donald Trump speaks with Vice President Mike Pence as they arrive Tuesday for a Fox News Channel virtual town hall at the White House. The White House is eyeing ways to ease the advisories that have sidelined workers, shuttered schools and led to a widespread economic slowdown.

WASHINGTON — With lives and the economy hanging in the balance, President Donald Trump said Tuesday he is hoping the country will be reopened by Easter, as he weighs how to refine nationwide social-distancing guidelines to put some workers back on the job amid the coronavirus outbreak.

As many public health officials call for stricter, not looser restrictions on public interactions, Trump said he was already looking toward easing the advisories that have sidelined workers, shuttered schools and led to a widespread economic slowdown.

"I would love to have the country opened up and just raring to go by Easter," he said during a Fox News virtual town hall.

Health experts have made clear that unless Americans continue to dramatically limit social interaction — staying home from work

and isolating themselves — the number of infections will overwhelm the health care system, as it has in parts of Italy, leading to many more deaths. While the worst outbreaks are concentrated in certain parts of the country, such as New York, experts warn that the highly infectious disease is certain to spread.

The U.S. is now more than a week into an unprecedented 15-day effort to encourage all Americans to drastically scale back their public activities.

"I gave it two weeks," Trump said during the virtual town hall from the Rose Garden. He argued that tens of thousands of Americans die from the seasonal flu or in automobile accidents and "we don't turn the country off."

"We'll assess at that time and we'll give it some more time if we need a little more time, but we need to open this country up," he added.

The reassessment comes as

the White House is encouraging lawmakers on Capitol Hill to pass a roughly \$2 trillion stimulus package to ease the financial pain for Americans and hard-hit industries.

Appearing before the president at the virtual town hall, Vice President Mike Pence said Trump has asked for recommendations from the White House coronavirus task force for how he can send people back to work while minimizing the public health risk.

Trump's enthusiasm for getting people back to work comes as he takes stock of the political toll the outbreak is taking. It sets up a potential conflict with medical professionals, including many within his government, who have called for more social restrictions to slow the spread of the virus, not fever.

Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic adviser, told reporters Tuesday that "public health includes economic health."

VIRUS OUTBREAK

UN: 85% of new cases, deaths are in Europe, US

By DAVID RISING
AND CHRIS BLAKE
Associated Press

BERLIN — The World Health Organization said Tuesday it has counted more than 395,000 total coronavirus cases globally, including 17,000 deaths. More than 103,000 have recovered from the virus, mostly in China.

Overnight reporting showed 85% of the new cases are being reported in Europe and the United States, said Dr. Margaret Harris, a WHO spokeswoman.

Harris said “in fact the outbreak is accelerating very rapidly and the case numbers we received overnight will put that up considerably.”

Spain began storing bodies in an ice rink converted into a makeshift morgue, as virus deaths rose in the country.

As virus deaths mounted and Americans hoped for some economic relief from their divided government, health officials and leaders warned that the world was entering a critical period that would determine just how deeply the pandemic slices through their nations.

While Chinese authorities said they would finally end a two-month lockdown in hard-hit Hubei province where the coronavirus outbreak first began, nations in Europe, North America and elsewhere pressed harder to enforce the stay-at-home restrictions placed on 1.5 billion people worldwide.

Those measures could significantly impact the trajectory that the virus will take as it spreads across the world.

“We are not helpless bystanders,” said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. “We can change the trajectory of this pandemic.”



Police officers stand in front of Madrid's ice rink turned into a temporary morgue due the COVID-19 crisis in Spain on Tuesday.

One viral social media video showed Italian mayors, sometimes profanely, berating their fellow citizens for not staying inside.

On Capitol Hill, top congressional and White House officials said they expect to reach a deal Tuesday on a nearly \$2 trillion measure aimed at easing the economic damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic. Democrats have argued that earlier proposals were tilted too much toward corporations rather than helping American workers and health care providers.

It appears that it will be soon that the U.S., which on Monday had a total of more than 46,000 infections and 530 deaths from the virus, overtakes hard-hit Italy

in the number of infections. Authorities say the U.S. is on track to eventually overtake China's nearly 82,000 infections and how soon that happens depends on how seriously Americans take the state-at-home restrictions.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo sounded his most dire warning yet about the pandemic, saying the infection rate in New York is accelerating and the state could be as close as two weeks away from a crisis that projects 40,000 people in intensive care.

Such a surge would overwhelm hospitals, which now have just 3,000 intensive care unit beds statewide. Cuomo said the rate of new infections is doubling about every three days. While officials once thought the peak in New

York would come in early May, they now say it could come in two to three weeks.

“We are not slowing it. And it is accelerating on its own,” he said during a briefing in New York City. “One of the forecasters said we were looking at a freight train coming across the country. We’re now looking at a bullet train.”

There were nearly 26,000 positive cases in New York state with 210 deaths, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University.

India will begin the world's largest lockdown.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced it in a TV address Tuesday night, warning that anyone going outside risked inviting the coronavirus inside their homes. He pledged \$2 billion to

By the numbers

395K

Total cases of coronavirus globally, according to the World Health Organization, with 17,000 deaths.

46K

Approximate coronavirus cases in the United States with roughly 530 deaths.

26K

Number of reported coronavirus cases in New York state, with 210 deaths, as of early Tuesday.

SOURCE: Associated Press

bolster the country's beleaguered health care system.

“To save India and every Indian, there will be a total ban on venturing out of your homes,” said Modi, adding that if the country failed to manage the next 21 days, it could be set back by 21 years.

India's stay-at-home order puts nearly one-fifth of the world's population under lockdown.

Indian health officials have reported 469 active cases of COVID-19 and 10 deaths. Officials have repeatedly insisted there is no evidence yet of communal spread but have conducted few tests.

Egypt sets curfew as virus spreads across Mideast

By SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

CAIRO — Egypt will impose a two-week nightly curfew in the Arab world's most populous country in an effort to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, its prime minister announced Tuesday, as the International Monetary Fund warned that a shortage of medical supplies could affect the Mideast's poorest nations.

There are over 31,000 confirmed cases of the virus across the Mideast, the vast majority in the hard-hit nation of Iran. While most recover from the virus and the COVID-19 illness that it causes, bottoming crude oil prices have put additional strain on even the region's wealthiest countries. That in turn could affect their ability to spend on needed supplies as the virus challenges medical systems worldwide.

Already, countries have reacted by either urging or ordering hundreds of millions of people to stay home. Egypt, home to over 100 million alone, has the latest on Tuesday.

The IMF, which traditionally has urged governments to implement greater austerity

measures, was urging Mideast governments to offer temporary tax relief and cash transfers. It warned a lack of medical supplies could hurt Iraq, Sudan and Yemen if it leads to a surge in prices.

“Given the large numbers of people employed in the service sector, there will be wide reverberations if unemployment rises and wages and remittances fall,” the IMF's director for the Middle East, Jihad Azour, said in statement.

In Egypt, tourist cancellations have reached 80%.

Retail and hospitality sectors have been hard-hit in countries like the United Arab Emirates, where tourism is a pillar of the economy, according to the IMF.

The arrival of the pandemic in Syria with one confirmed case, as well as the impoverished Gaza Strip, has raised concerns the virus could run rampant in some of the most vulnerable areas in the Middle East. War-torn Libya and Yemen, which have yet to report any cases, are also a source of concern.

The worst outbreak in the Mideast is unfolding in Iran, where authorities reported

another 122 deaths on Tuesday, bringing the total number of fatalities to more than 1,900 amid more than 24,800 confirmed cases. The dead included the mother-in-law of the son of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the state-run IRNA news agency said Monday.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour warned the public that infections will likely rise further, as Iran now has more ability to test and screen suspected cases. The ministry has launched a website for the public to report if they suspect they have the virus, which will link them to medical staff to come and test them.

So far, 41 million people have used the site, Jahanpour said. Iran is home to some 80 million people.

Lines have formed outside grocery stores, banks and gas stations across the Syrian capital, Damascus, as people braced for wider closures. The government has already closed restaurants, cafes and other businesses, and has halted public transportation.

Saudi Arabia announced Tuesday that its virus cases jumped from 562 to 767, and included its first death.



VAHID SALEMI/AP

A woman walks past shoe shops in a mostly empty street in a commercial district in downtown Tehran, Iran, on Sunday.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Pandemic upends campaign themes for both parties

BY ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus pandemic and the nation's crashing economy are scrambling the themes both major political parties thought would carry them to victory in November for control of the White House and Congress.

Shattered, certainly for now, is President Donald Trump's ability to tout a brawny economy and record stock market prices as the predicate for his reelection. The GOP could face a hard time calling Democratic candidates socialists with a straight face as Congress works on a bipartisan, near \$2 trillion rescue package that would essentially have government drive the economy indefinitely.

Democrats say they're the party that will protect people's health care, but it's unclear that would be heard by people focused mostly on when life will return to normal. And by pounding away at Trump's competence, they'd risk alienating voters who, during a stressful time, want policymakers to produce solutions, not partisan wrangling.

"We're in the middle of a hurricane. We don't know all the political consequences. We don't know if it's a Cat 1 or a Cat 5," said GOP consultant Matt Mackowiak, referring to categories used to express the strength of storms.

Trump has seized public attention with almost daily briefings about the government's response to the pandemic. That's left former Vice President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic presidential nominee, and his party's congressional candidates searching for ways to break into the news cycle.

Clearly, campaign themes are changing.

Five political advertisers had run ads mentioning the coronavirus through last week, according to Advertising Analytics, a firm that tracks ad data. That included one in Florida, in Spanish, by Biden, and two by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

"In times like this, we must work together," Collins, who faces a competitive November reelection in a state that prizes independence, tells the camera.

More in coming. The largest outside Democratic political organization, planned to start ads Tuesday in election battlegrounds Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The spot plays Trump's own words, including, "We have it totally under control," as a bar graph displays the skyrocketing number of corona-

virus cases.

The spot ends as "AMERICA NEEDS A LEADER WE CAN TRUST" is displayed against a black background.

GOP operatives say Republican candidates must emphasize rallying behind the effort to battle the twin crises.

"The message is, 'We all need to come together, support the president and vice president and do all we can to fight the virus,'" Republican strategist John Feehery said. "Throw everything else out the window."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee provided a memo last week offering guidance to its candidates.

"Remind followers through your actions that you take this seriously and would be a calm voice through crisis," the House Democratic political arm said in the guidance obtained by The Associated Press.

It urged candidates to discuss the significance of health care access and affordability — issues that helped the party capture House control in 2018. It suggested asking voters, "How are you doing?" and "Do you need anything" during phone calls.

Both parties say it's too early to know if the virus will be contained and the economy resuscitated by the time voters focus on the fall campaigns — and whether they'll blame or laud Trump and the GOP for the outcome.

Either way, Trump is casting himself as a wartime president in hopes of garnering the broad public support that usually goes to national leaders in times of crisis.

His reelection campaign has been using the emergencies in fundraising appeals that offer supporters autographed "Keep America Great" hats. "Our country is facing unprecedented times right now and President Trump is working around the clock to keep our Nation and its citizens safe," his emails say.

Biden used a fundraiser, held by phone, to swipe at Trump, who's made numerous false statements about the virus, including on its seriousness and the availability of tests.

"We need to tell the American people the truth, the unvarnished truth," Biden said.

Republicans concede the party faces a huge downside should the virus remain uncontrolled.

"If we become Italy," said the consultant Mackowiak, citing the country with the highest death toll so far, "there's no question the party in power would pay a political price for that. Absolutely no question."



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Plenty of distance

Trey Evans participates in an online yoga class using his laptop and headphones outside at Eleanor Tinsley Park near downtown Houston on Tuesday. BIG Power Yoga has been holding online classes during the coronavirus outbreak.

House mulls voting options amid outbreak

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With at least two members of the House testing positive for coronavirus, Democrats are recommending that they pass a nearly \$2 trillion economic rescue package by unanimous consent, meaning no lawmakers would have to be present for the vote.

If that doesn't work — only one member has to object to stop it — then House Democrats say there are other options for voting from afar, including proxy votes that could see a handful of members casting votes for others. The options are discussed in a new report commissioned by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and released late Monday evening.

One option Democrats are taking off the table: remote electronic voting. The report, written by House Rules Committee Chairman James McGovern, D-Mass., determined there were too many security concerns in addition to logistical and technical challenges in the middle of the public health crisis.

The simplest route is the most obvious: passing the legislation by voice vote or unanimous consent, neither of which requires the full House to be present. The report said this is "by far the best option" — using existing House rules and practices. However,

it could be derailed if even one member appears on the floor to object.

Under the proxy proposal, a member of the House could be allowed to designate a colleague to vote for them in the event they are unable to return to Washington amid the coronavirus outbreak. If there are objections to a unanimous consent vote, the report said, proxy voting "is likely the best of the options available under the circumstances."

Proxy voting would require a rules change but could be quickly adopted if there were universal support for the idea, according to the report.

Beyond proxy voting, the House could temporarily increase the number of people it would take to object to a unanimous consent request, decreasing the possibility that one person could derail the whole process.

If a recorded vote becomes necessary, the report recommends practices similar to what the Senate has been doing over the last week — extending the time of votes so members wouldn't have to crowd on the floor to cast their ballots. The report suggests that the House could make votes safer by "having Members vote in shifts, sanitizing voting stations between uses, and controlling how many people are in the chamber and their proximity to each other."

VETERANS

Efforts to get housing for homeless vets halt

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As offices close and much of the country shifted to remote work this month, progress stopped to get homeless veterans into permanent housing at a time they need it most, advocates say.

Veterans who received housing vouchers from the government but had not yet rented a home before the coronavirus pandemic are now unable to find housing, said Kathryn Monet, chief executive officer of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Meanwhile, the homeless population is at increased risk of contracting the virus, and the economic fallout is expected to push more Americans into homelessness.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans is urging Congress to approve \$200 million in emergency funding to temporarily house homeless veterans in hotel rooms and secure coronavirus tests for those who get sick.

"If homeless veterans are left behind in any congressional response to this pandemic, the consequences will be deadly," Monet said. "Congress must distribute

additional resources to [the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor] so that organizations serving this population can continue to do so, safely and effectively."

The HVAF of Indiana, which stands for "helping veterans and families," houses homeless veterans in Indianapolis. The organization has been unable to get veterans with housing vouchers into permanent homes since the pandemic hit the U.S., said Emmy Hildebrand, HVAF's vice president of public policy.

"It seems like those moves-in will be on hold until all of this is over," Hildebrand said.

Employees at the local housing authority are working from home and unable to complete the inspections that are required before veterans can move into their rental units. Landlords are also closing their offices.

Some of the veterans waiting to use their vouchers are currently residing in shelters, transitional housing programs, on the street or in their cars. Without the usual flow of veterans moving into permanent housing, shelters and transitional programs are expect-

ed to reach capacity. At HVAF, their beds are already full.

"Anyone who has a voucher is basically homeless until the coronavirus subsides in their community," Monet said. "Without permanent housing, we're going to see a huge spike in veterans who don't have access to a shelter or transitional housing beds."

To help with the problem, local groups like HVAF are getting veterans and their families into hotel and motel rooms, which is permitted in emergency situations. On Monday alone, Hildebrand received requests from three veterans who wanted to get themselves and their families into hotels. The problem is that there's limited funding to do it.

"We're hoping to find additional resources to be able to meet that need," she said. "Without permanent housing options available, we have nowhere to put people."

Getting veterans into hotels and motels will help with the need for social distancing, particularly for those older than 60 or with underlying health conditions, Monet argued. The population of homeless veterans lacks reliable access to running water and hygiene prod-

ucts, is aging and has few safe spaces to isolate or self-quarantine, she said.

Experts at the University of Pennsylvania, University of California Los Angeles and Boston University published research on March 20 which estimated that more than 21,000 homeless Americans, about 4.3% of the country's total homeless population, would require hospitalization because of the coronavirus, and that more than 3,400 would die. The virus has created a "severe and emergent health care crisis" for the homeless population that is "likely to wreak havoc" on this already vulnerable group, the report says.

The experts estimated that the country would need an additional 400,000 shelter beds to house all homeless Americans and provide for social distancing to help prevent the spread of the virus. They called on local, state and federal governments to work together to immediately shelter the homeless, provide space for social distancing and isolate the sick.

"There are obvious and immediate steps that we can take to mitigate this situation," they

wrote. "The urgency is clear, as is the moral imperative to act."

The effects are likely to be felt most on the West Coast, particularly California, the research shows. Los Angeles County is expected to be the hardest hit.

The funding request from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans includes money for coronavirus tests for homeless veterans. The group is also seeking funding for the government to supply shelters with disinfectant and sanitation products, train outreach staff to administer the tests, provide protective gear for those staff members and increase surveillance of the homeless veteran population to identify and track cases of the virus.

"Those who had been exposed are unable to follow the recommendations of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and stay 'at home,'" Monet wrote in her letter to lawmakers. "Instead, these individuals are surviving unsheltered, in congregate shelters or group homes where transmission to others is increasingly likely."

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SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market

Transportation
944

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NATION

Pandemic doesn't deter agencies' rollbacks

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is rejecting appeals to slow its deregulatory drive while Americans grapple with the coronavirus, pushing major public health and environmental rollbacks closer to enactment in recent days despite the pandemic.

As Americans stockpiled food and medicine and retreated indoors and businesses shuttered in hopes of riding out COVID-19, federal agencies in recent days moved forward on rollbacks that included a widely opposed deregulatory action by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The proposed rule would require disclosure of the raw data behind any scientific study used in the rulemaking process. That includes confidential medical records that opponents say could be used to identify people.

The EPA says the rule, first introduced in 2018, is designed to

increase transparency. But early drafts drew more than a half-million comments, most of them in opposition. Health experts say it would handcuff federal officials' ability to regulate proven health threats in the future, by making it impossible for regulators to draw on findings of public health studies.

The EPA has dismissed demands from 14 attorneys general, the National Governors' Association, the National League of Cities and dozens of other government, public health and environmental groups and officials that it at least tap the brakes on that proposed rule while officials confront "the national emergency that arises from the COVID-19 pandemic."

Federal agencies should suspend steps toward enactment for any nonessential rule changes, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, one of those signing the appeal, said in a separate email. "During this unprecedented public health emergency, we

'As regulations.gov is fully functioning, there is no barrier to the public providing comment.'

Enesta Jones
EPA spokeswoman

should be focusing our resources on protecting the health and well being of our residents not on fighting against the Trump Administration's reckless environmental proposals and actions," Healey said.

Asked for comment, EPA spokeswoman Enesta Jones said the agency is "open and continuing our regulatory work as usual."

Jones said that the public can still have its say on the proposed rule. "As regulations.gov is fully functioning, there is no barrier to

the public providing comment," Jones said.

President Donald Trump and his agency chiefs have less than 10 months left in his current term to complete the administration's business-friendly easing of the way the federal government enforces scores of environmental and public health protections.

The Interior Department, for example, is moving ahead with a measure that would greatly ease protections under the more than century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Interior closed the 30-day comment period for the change as scheduled last week. Critics say the changes could devastate threatened and endangered species and speed an already documented decline in U.S. bird populations overall.

Interior also ticked off required procedural steps in March on consideration of a ConocoPhillips oil and gas project in the Alaska wilderness and on a development plan for land surrounding New

Mexico's Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a World Heritage site at the center of a long debate over oil and gas development, among other projects.

Interior spokesman Conner Swanson called it "unfortunate that these interest groups are playing politics at a time when all Americans need to come together."

"All DOI actions, including comment periods, are being evaluated on a case-by-case basis and adjustments are being made to ensure we are allowing for proper public input, while protecting the health and safety of the public and our employees," Swanson said.

Opponents also say they expect the White House to make public as soon as next week the latest version of its rollback in vehicle emissions standards, weakening one of the Obama administration's major efforts against climate-damaging fossil fuel emissions.

Future: USMC modernization plan calls for III MEF in Pacific to have three littoral regiments

FROM FRONT PAGE

The Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy puts China and Russia as the major world powers that the United States must be prepared to challenge as America's military advantages decline. The economic policies of China and its militarization of the South China Sea and Russia's efforts to undermine NATO and its nuclear arsenal are major concerns for the U.S. military, according to the National Defense Strategy.

"The Marine Corps is redesigning the 2030 force for naval expeditionary warfare in actively contested spaces, fully aligning the service with the direction of the [National Defense Strategy]," the service Combat Development Command said in a statement, adding it will continue to evaluate and adjust the force design.

The Marine unit categories that will see reductions in 10 years are:

■ Infantry battalions, which will drop to 21 from 24.

■ Artillery batteries, which will go to five down from 21

■ Amphibious vehicle companies, which will go down to four from six.

■ F-35B and F-35C Lightning II fighter squadrons, which will have fewer aircraft per unit, from 16 aircraft down to 10.

Tilt-rotor, attack, and heavy-lift squadrons will also have reductions and deactivations. The Marine Corps will eliminate its law enforcement battalions, units that build bridges and reduce the service personnel by 12,000 in 10 years, a less than 7% reduction in the service's total force, according to the statement.

The reduction in units, equipment and personnel is geared toward the Marine Corps' refocused efforts to work more closely with the Navy, especially in the Pacific region to compete against China.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Courtney on Okinawa, Japan, is the main



AVERI COPPA/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines advance on their objective during Exercise Trident Juncture in Norway in 2018. Since summer, the Marine Corps has undergone a review of its personnel, units and equipment to determine what type of forces the service will need to fight future battles.

focus of Marine efforts in the region, according to the statement.

The III MEF will be modernized to have three Marine littoral regiments that are trained and equipped to operate within contested maritime areas, according to the statement. The region will

also have three Marine expeditionary units that are globally deployable. The other two Marine expeditionary force units will provide forces to the III MEF, according to the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps is also planning to increase its long-range

rocket artillery abilities by 300%, reduce the size of infantry battalions to allow for a more distributed force, and invest in unmanned air and ground systems, according to the statement.

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Supreme Court rules states can bar insanity defense

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Monday that states can prevent criminal defendants from pleading insanity without violating their constitutional rights. The decision could prompt states across the country to tighten standards for defendants who wish to plead not guilty

by reason of insanity.

The justices' 6-3 decision came in a case from Kansas, where James Kraig Kahler was sentenced to death for killing his estranged wife, two teenage daughters and his wife's grandmother.

Kahler wanted to mount an insanity defense, but Kansas is

one of four states that eliminated a defendant's ability to plead not guilty by reason of insanity. Idaho, Montana and Utah are the states. Alaska also limits the insanity defense.

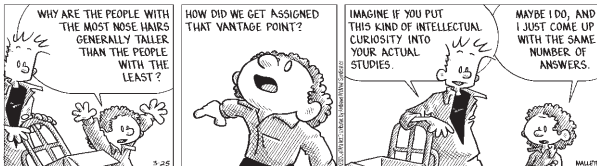
Justice Elena Kagan wrote for the court that "Kansas takes account of mental health at both trial and sentencing. It has just

not adopted the particular insanity defense Kahler would like. That choice is for Kansas to make — and, if it wishes, to remake and remake again as the future unfolds," Kagan wrote in upholding a ruling from the Kansas Supreme Court.

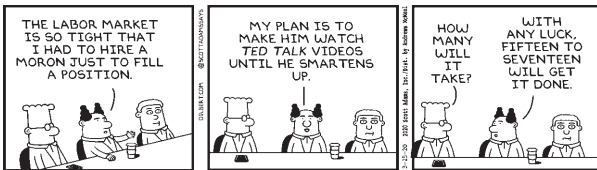
Kagan's three liberal colleagues dissented. Kansas "has

eliminated the core of a defense that has existed for centuries: that the defendant, due to mental illness, lacked the mental capacity necessary for his conduct to be considered morally blameworthy," Justice Stephen Breyer wrote for himself and Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

Frazz



Dilbert



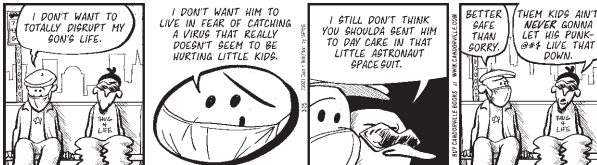
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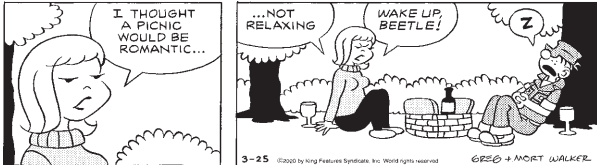
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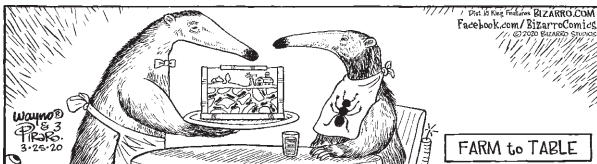
Carpe Diem



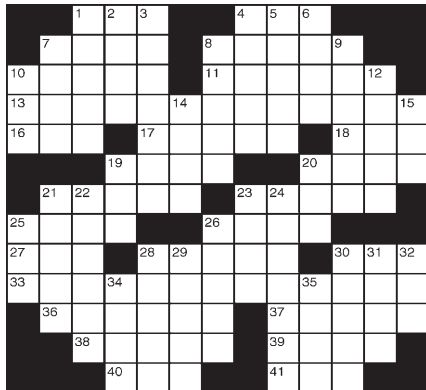
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Ballpark fig.
- 4 Shaft of light
- 7 Rwandan people
- 8 Relaxed
- 10 Clear wrap
- 11 Handgun
- 13 Feminist leader who co-founded Ms. magazine
- 16 Lean — (sheds)
- 17 Job openings
- 18 Corn serving
- 19 Thailand, once
- 20 Suffix with song or gab
- 21 Miserly Manner
- 23 — Called "Wanda"
- 25 Oodles
- 26 Despot
- 27 Pot-bellied pet
- 28 Word with poem or opera
- 30 Acapulco gold
- 33 Grammy-winning lead singer of Miami Sound Machine
- 36 "A Streetcar Named Desire" cry
- 37 Loosen

DOWN

- 3 Not hollow actor
- 4 Observe
- 11 Chaney of horror films
- 15 "The A-Team"
- 19 Devious
- 20 Fragrant tree
- 21 Mayflower features
- 22 Gold bars
- 23 Unrepaired
- 24 True
- 25 Fuel stat
- 26 Tire pattern
- 28 French textile city
- 29 New Haven collegian
- 30 Frequently
- 31 April forecast
- 32 Inseparable
- 34 Antique cars
- 35 Within (Pref.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	L	A	V	C	P	A	C	A	N
L	I	L	I	A	R	T	U	N	T
I	D	I	G	M	O	D	E	R	A
M	O	D	I	C	U	M	N	A	T
				L	O	S	B	I	T
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A	N	D	P	A	Y	N	E	E	
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3-25

CRYPTOQUIP

REG PWREJHBQ EGQQ'U
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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN LIGHTNING
HITS A TALL CELLPHONE STRUCTURE, I SUPPOSE
THAT COULD LEAD TO A TOWER OUTAGE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals H

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Train helps rescue hiker after 200-foot fall

NH BRETTON WOODS — A hiker descending Mount Washington who was severely injured in a 200-foot fall was rescued with the help of the Cog Railway train that takes visitors up and down the summit during tourism season.

New Hampshire Fish and Game conservation officers said that the hiker, Ashley Furness, 35, of Bartlett, was with a companion Sunday afternoon when she slipped and fell, striking several rocks. She was descending along the railway tracks and was about 2 miles up from the railway station.

Her companion called for help and kept her warm with a blanket after descending to where she landed. It took hours for rescuers to reach her due to the steep, icy terrain and remote location. The Cog Railway prepared a train, which reached her and returned to a waiting ambulance at the base around 11 p.m. Sunday.

Mount Washington is the tallest mountain in the Northeast with a summit of 6,288 feet.

Man shot after bringing gun into county jail

FL ORLANDO — A man who held three people captive while being booked into the Orange County Jail in Orlando on Saturday night was shot in the shoulder by deputies and officers.

Eric Jefferson Stanley, 25, was taken to a hospital for treatment, Orange County Sheriff John Mina said during a news conference. Stanley is facing multiple felony charges.

Mina told news outlets that Stanley was arrested with one other person on drug charges Saturday evening. He managed to slip off the flex cuffs he was restrained with and pulled a gun. Officials didn't say how he got the gun inside the booking area of the jail.

Mina said Stanley pointed the gun at a corrections officer. He shot at the jail nurse when she tried to run away. Then officers shot at him from outside, hitting him in the shoulder.

Orville Wright bust back in place at memorial

NC KILL DEVIL HILLS — The recovered bust of aviation pioneer Orville Wright is back on a pedestal next to the memorial honoring his and brother's achievements on North Carolina's Outer Banks more than a century ago.

The National Park Service said the bust and the granite base damaged during a theft in October have been repaired. The News & Observer of Raleigh reported. The bust was placed atop the base at the foot of Wright Brothers National Memorial Park last Friday.

A similar bust remains on the other side of the memorial in the likeness of Wilbur Wright. It was at Kill Devil Hills that the brothers conducted their powered air flight with a pilot aboard on Dec.



ERIC GAY/AP

What shark?

A visitor takes photos at a souvenir shop Monday in Port Aransas, Texas. Businesses in Port Aransas are feeling the effects of the coronavirus outbreak as groups are staying away from the popular beach area in the islands off the coast of Texas.

17, 1903.

The park service said last fall that the granite base on which the Orville Wright bust was mounted had been toppled and damaged. The bust was located a few days later by a beach visitor who said it was tucked in some sand dunes.

Kids removed from home with suspected meth lab

MA FOXBOROUGH — Four young children have been removed from a Foxborough home, and two people will face charges after authorities said that they uncovered a suspected methamphetamine lab.

Police removed the children while serving a search warrant at the home Sunday, state fire officials said. The children were taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Officials said the arrests are the result of months of investigation by the Massachusetts State Police's clandestine Lab Enforcement Team. The team is made up of detectives, chemists and bomb squad technicians who work with officials at the state's Department of Fire Services.

\$10K reward for tips on killer of whooping crane

LA NEW ORLEANS — The reward for information leading to the person or people responsible for killing an endangered whooping crane has

THE CENSUS

\$25K

more valuable of the two instruments is an \$18,000 brown 2001 violin crafted by Marilyn Wallin, an award-winning violin maker who lives and works in Lincoln. The second violin is a 1919 Neff Philadelphia model valued at \$3,000. The vintage bow from German maker Nuremberg is valued at \$3,500.

The approximate value of two violins and a bow that were stolen from a music shop in Lincoln, Neb. The instruments were stolen from Capital City Strings sometime between Christmas and Wednesday, the Lincoln Journal Star reported. The

increased to \$10,000, according to wildlife officials in Louisiana.

Donations from various groups doubled a reward offered earlier, according to a news release from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The 1½-year-old crane's body was found Nov. 15 in a rice and crawfish field in the town of Elton in Jefferson Davis Parish. A necropsy determined that it had been shot that day or the previous day.

Whooping cranes are among the world's most endangered birds. The Louisiana wildlife agency and its partners have reintroduced more than 150 into the state since 2011, the release stated. There are now about 75 birds in Louisiana's flock, including three that hatched in the wild.

Threats against judges lands man back in jail

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Broward Sheriff's officials said that a South Florida man went before a judge for the

third time in a week for threatening county judges.

Records showed that Todd Edward Watson, 56, is being held in the Broward County Jail without bond on several charges that include aggravated stalking.

According to his latest arrest report Saturday, Watson twice left "obscene, filthy, vulgar, indecent and threatening" voicemails on the phones of three judges, in violation of the terms of his probation.

"This is the third time I've arrested him," said Detective Joseph Kessling at a court hearing Wednesday. "He basically has been terrorizing the judges and their families here in the Broward County courthouse for several years."

Felon poses with gun on Facebook, gets jail time

MT MISSOULA — A convicted felon has been sentenced to a year in federal prison after his probation officer

saw a picture of him holding guns on a sporting goods company's Facebook page, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Brandon Richmond Turner, 29, of Missoula, had been sentenced for a felony in Lake County in January 2017 and was prohibited from possessing firearms, prosecutors said.

His probation officer saw the image last June. Turner admitted he retrieved his rifle and a pistol from a friend, who was keeping his guns after his conviction.

Turner pleaded guilty in December to being a felon in possession of a firearm and was sentenced Friday by U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy.

Court mulls ongoing education for judges

MI LANSING — The Michigan Supreme Court is seeking public comment on a proposal to require annual education courses for judges.

The court said that the goal is to ensure proficiency about current law, integrity on the bench and administrative skills. Judges would be required to fulfill a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year.

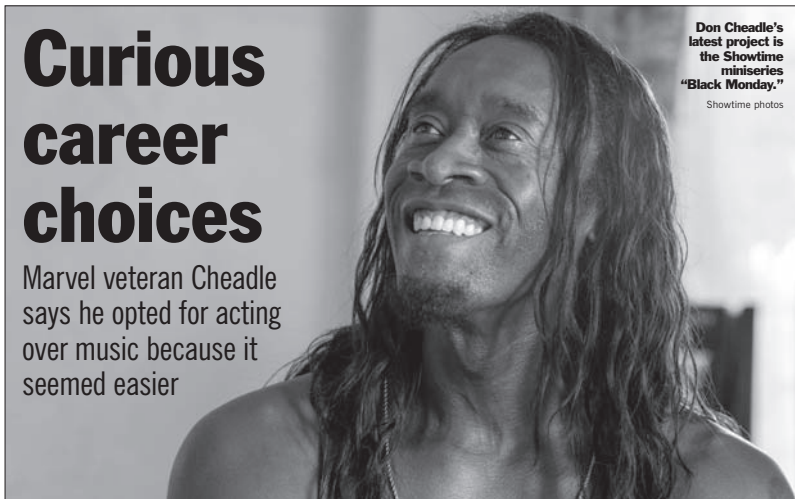
Justice Richard Bernstein said that ongoing education is a good goal. But he said he's also concerned that a mandatory program would turn into a hardship for an "already burdened judiciary."

From wire reports

FACES

Curious career choices

Marvel veteran Cheadle says he opted for acting over music because it seemed easier



Don Cheadle's latest project is the Showtime miniseries "Black Monday."
Showtime photos

Slim odds of BTS touring North America

From wire services

It's looking increasingly likely that the biggest tour of 2020 in North America — the BTS Map of the Soul trek — might need to be canceled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

As it stands, the trek is currently set to kick off with a two-night stand, April 25-26, in Santa Clara, Calif. — smack dab in the middle of the Northern California county that has been hardest hit by COVID-19.

But basically every other major Bay Area concert originally scheduled for April has already been postponed, including dates with the Eagles, Celine Dion, Lauren Daigle and Billie Eilish, as officials try to limit people from gathering together.

And BTS is a bigger deal than any of those concerts. Talk about a large gathering. The K-pop act's two huge shows would collectively attract some 100,000 fans.

Still, there has been no official word about these dates being changed. They are still listed on the band's website, alongside all others on the tour. Tickets for the show (mainly re-sell ones at this point) are still available on Ticketmaster.

Given what we've seen so far as the music industry reacts to COVID-19, it seems likely that BTS will follow the lead of other artists and postpone the whole spring North American tour, which also includes dates at the Rose Bowl Stadium in the Los Angeles area, Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas and Soldier Field in Chicago, among others.

BTS — arguably the most popular band in the world — has already canceled several shows, originally scheduled for April, in its native South Korea due to concerns over COVID-19.

Albert Uderzo, a creator of French hero Asterix, dies

Albert Uderzo, one of the two creators of the beloved comic book character Asterix, who captured the spirit of the Gauls of yore and grew a reputation worldwide, died Tuesday. He was 92.

The French press quoted family members as saying that Uderzo died of a heart attack in the Paris suburb of Neuilly.

Asterix, portrayed as a short man always wearing a helmet with wings, was created in the early 1960s by Uderzo, an illustrator, and writer Rene Goscinny. The character lived in a village in Gaul, present-day France, resisting Roman conquerors, along with his plump, inseparable friend Obelix.

After Goscinny's death in 1977, Uderzo also took over the comic book's writing duties.

Other news

■ Amazon is granting free streaming access to more than 40 children's shows, including "Pete the Cat" and "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie," and select seasons of PBS Kids shows including "Arthur" and "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood." The titles can be accessed with a valid Amazon account, which is free. The shows are available to customers worldwide.

■ Celebrity Rosie O'Donnell's Sunday fundraising charity show on streaming raised more than \$600,000 for virus victims.

■ Renowned jazz man Mann Dibango, to many the beloved "Papa Groove" who served as an inspiration and pioneer in his art, died in France on Tuesday after suffering from the coronavirus, his official Facebook page announced. He was 86. The saxophonist inspired what is known as "world music" in the 1970s with the song "Soul Makossa."

By LUAINA LEE
Tribune News Service

Although he'd already graduated from a prestigious arts institute, actor Don Cheadle immediately signed up for writers' school.

"It was on Sunset Boulevard, and the whole reason to go there was not just to be a waiter," he says. "But when you graduated, the teacher would call you in the back like Don Corleone and give you tips. 'OK, this is the guy at Spago; call him.' And, 'This is the person at Tower; call him.' You got the insider stuff," he whispers.

"But I got an acting job the day I was getting ready to go to my first meeting for a waiter's job. I just never went back."

It's been 35 years, and Cheadle says he's twice blessed that he's never had to balance a tray full of prime rib or hawk time-shares or extinguish fires for a living.

He's earned his keep as an actor, though music was almost his first choice. "When I graduated from high school I had a couple different scholarships to pursue: either acting or jazz, vocal jazz, instrumental jazz. And I picked acting," he says.

"It was a weather-related choice as well — but I knew what it was going to take to be the kind of musician on the level that I wanted to be, the kind of music I heard and understood. And I knew I wasn't going to be sitting in a room studying scales. I just knew I wouldn't be doing that kind of work," he says, shaking his head.

"I didn't realize acting was going to be as hard. There's much work to do that as well, but there's some very specific skill-set you have to have to be a musician. And I just knew I wasn't going to put in that work."

Ever since he was 10, he liked performing and putting in the work. In that first role, he played Templeton the Rat in "Charlotte's Web."

His family moved often when he was a kid, as his parents were both pursuing academic degrees. His dad is a psychologist who earned his master's at the University of Colorado Boulder and his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska.

"So he was moving around where he

was getting money and scholarships and support," says Cheadle. "I was an education brat. I wasn't an Army brat."

"Moving can have one of two different kinds of effects," he says. "Either you can get kind of good at making friends again and jumping back out there. Or you can say, 'Well, I have to count on ME.' I was an extrovert, somebody who made friends easily and always found a way to make it work."

Both parents encouraged him in his passion for acting and drove him from Denver to California so Cheadle could study at CalArts in Valencia, about 40 miles north of Los Angeles. "They (the professors at CalArts) wanted you to stay up there and learn what you were doing, and discouraged you from going to L.A. for auditions," he recalls.

But Cheadle's friend, Jesse Borrego, was cast in "Fame," and landed an agent who took on Cheadle as well. "She started sending me out on stuff over the summer, and I started getting work, so once I came back to school I had a job and still went to school. Then it kind of happened," he says.

What 'kind of happened' was that Cheadle was to go on to star in four "Oceans" movies, two "Iron Man" films, the hits "Crash," "Hotel Rwanda" and several high-ranking TV series.

He's back again for a new season as the loudmouth Mo in Showtime's 10-part comedy "Black Monday." The series is about the Wall Street crash of 1987 and the excesses of the untamed '80s. Cheadle plays a Wall Street trader now on the lam.

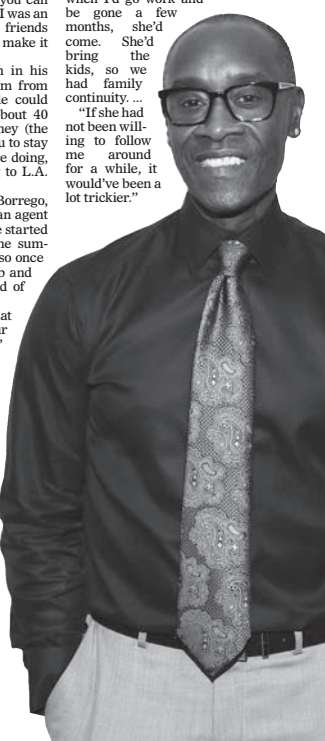
"I've been very, very lucky, blessed to only do this to support myself," Cheadle muses. "I remember a couple times where I thought, 'Ew, I don't know ...' I remember calling my mom one time and saying, 'I don't know if I made the right choice.'"

"And she said, 'This is what you've been saying you want to do since you were 10 years old. Don't quit. Just keep going it.'"

He and his spouse, Bridgit Coulter, have two daughters, 26 and 24.

"God bless my wife," he says, "because when I'd go work and be gone a few months, she'd come. She'd bring the kids, so we had family continuity. ..."

"If she had not been willing to follow me around for a while, it would've been a lot trickier."



'I've been very, very lucky, blessed to only do this to support myself.'

Don Cheadle

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OPINION

For doctors' sake, please stay home

By NINA SHAPIRO

Special to The Washington Post

The numbers of cases, hospitalizations and deaths from the new coronavirus are mind-blowing, even to the most seasoned health care professionals. Every day, we see the latest version of the upward curve, hoping to one day see it "flatten." But it's not happening today, when I see one patient, even a healthy one, I see a crowd bigger than in any photo you'll see on any television news show or online.

Health care providers have been asking — no, begging — people to stay home while we go. As a pediatric otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist), I primarily treat infants and children with ear infections, sleep and breathing issues due to tonsils and adenoids blocking the airway, and more urgent issues that take place in the hospital setting. These days, it's the healthy kids coming in for minor surgery who worry me.

One minor surgery (ear tubes) has morphed from one of the safest, most satisfying procedures on the planet to potentially one of the deadliest. This procedure is performed under something called "general mask anesthesia," in which an infant or child inhales two anesthetic gases while being supported via a mask and bag ventilation by an anesthesia specialist.

The mask always fits snugly, but it is never a perfect fit. There is often a little bit of a leak of the child's exhaled respiration that wafts out to the room. Normally, that's no big deal. But these days, the patient could be spreading respiratory drop-

Those of us who treat children rarely wear white coats. Now we're attending to children in our hazmat suits. They're terrified. So are we.

lets containing the deadly virus to a room full of people. Strike that. To millions of people.

In the case of this virus, each infected individual has the potential to infect three other people — and each of them can spread it to three more: $3 \times 3 = 9$. Those nine can each spread it to three more: $9 \times 3 = 27$. Those 27 can spread it to ... well, you get the point. Do this 13 times and you will get to more than 1 million.

Last week, you could sense these virtual millions in my operating room, although there were just five of us caring for one patient. Ear infections had made this toddler miserable, and medicine hadn't helped.

So even though this is ostensibly an "elective" procedure — the kind we're now being advised to postpone — we decided to go ahead. We donned our protective gear, including N95 masks, surgical masks on top of those, eye protection, gowns and gloves. This is a major procedure in and of itself, even before the patient goes off to sleep.

After the procedure, we doffed our gear. There is a method and precise order to this. It takes time and practice. Most people, health care workers included, get it wrong, and mistakes only act to spread the virus.

And what about that distinction between "elective" and "necessary"? The difference isn't always as clear as you might think.

What about the child who's up all night screaming, tormented by fevers caused by

ear infections? An ear-tube operation, a five-minute procedure, could relieve that. Helping that child could also save millions of people at risk from COVID-19.

And what about the child who has horrible sleep problems, with snoring, gasping, coughing and choking all night? A tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy could relieve the child's distress but put millions of people in danger. Surgeries in the mouth, including dental work, oral surgery and throat surgery, are considered especially risky.

Cancer surgery is not elective, but even that is now up for debate. Here's the current recommendation: If your cancer isn't going to grow in the next 30 days, cancel your cancer surgery. These are indeed dark days.

Now, many of us are wearing full-on protective gear in settings where we'd normally wear traditional scrubs and maybe some cute clogs or a funky scrub hat or pin. Those of us who treat children rarely wear white coats, so as not to scare the kids. In fact, many of us wear scrubs, silly ties or bright-colored shoes. Now we're attending to children in our hazmat suits. They're terrified. So are we.

Hospitals and clinics have limited supplies, so we are already rationing. We have been informed that when supplies run out, they won't be replenished. So we're cutting back on whom we see, who gets protection, who gets care and who has to wait. We look official in our gear. But don't be fooled by the fancy goggles; we're just as spooked as you are.

Many folks have offered to help us. We are grateful. For those offering support to health care workers, we say this: We will go to work for you, but please stay at home for us. Think of the millions of people you can help by doing just that.

Nina Shapiro is a professor of otolaryngology at the University of California at Los Angeles and author of "Hype: A Doctor's Guide to Medical Myths, Exaggerated Claims, and Bad Advice."

Coronavirus is not a reason to lift Iran sanctions

By ELI LAKE

Bloomberg Opinion

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani did something unusual last week. In an open letter to the American people, he appealed to their conscience to end the sanctions against his country.

The context, of course, was the coronavirus. The pandemic has closed schools, canceled public ceremonies and suspended businesses, he wrote, and yet the sanctions on Iran remain. "Can the American people accept that these malicious pressures are brought to bear on the Iranian people in their name, as a result of their vote, and by the means of their taxes?" he asked.

Rouhani's public letter dovetails with his regime's broader strategy since 2018, when President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal and imposed secondary sanctions on Iran's oil. Iran has escalated its military pressure, while playing the victim. At the beginning of the year, the U.S. responded in kind, killing the country's most important general, Qassem Soleimani.

With the outbreak of coronavirus in Iran, the country's outlook is bleak. As of this writing, Iran has 110 cases in Iran, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. That number is probably low. As the Atlantic's Graeme Wood has reported, estimates suggest Iran is facing more than half a million cases. Faced with such a huge public health crisis, Iran's leaders are understandably pleading for economic relief.

The problem is that even in Iran's moment of need, its regime remains aggressive and defiant, as Bloomberg's Bobby Ghosh has noted. This month alone, Iranian proxies attacked a U.S. base in Iraq, the regime denied access to international nuclear inspectors in Iran and the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps suggested its virus might be a U.S. biological weapon.

If Rouhani wants the U.S. to relieve the sanctions against his country, then the country's supreme leader needs to end militia attacks on Americans in Iraq, allow U.N. inspectors access to all of the country's nuclear sites and stop spreading propaganda about the virus. That is also the view of a senior State Department who spoke to me on Saturday.

That said, the U.S. has tried to make it easier for the regime to purchase or trade for medicine and hospital equipment since the pandemic started. Last month, the U.S. and Swiss governments established a humanitarian aid channel to make it easier for banks and financial institutions to underwrite such transactions with Iran. The Iranians haven't used it to make significant purchases. (The sanctions against Iran already include an exemption for humanitarian aid such as food and medicine, but banks shied away from it, fearing the aid could be diverted and expose their institutions to fines and penalties from the Treasury Department.)

The truth is that there is little anyone can do for Iran at the moment. Even if the oil

sanctions were lifted tomorrow, the price of oil has plummeted. The country's main export will not yield very much revenue to help fight the pandemic. Even if it did, an infusion of cash would not fix the public health crisis for which Iran's leaders were not prepared.

Fred Kagan, an Iran policy expert at the American Enterprise Institute, told me he thinks it unlikely that Iran's regime will collapse as a result of the coronavirus. Nonetheless, he thinks the possibility is greater today than it was before the outbreak. Members of the military and internal security militias might choose to stay home and care for sick relatives, he said, than do the violence necessary to disperse restless crowds if protests begin again.

As for lifting U.S. sanctions on Iran, Kagan says that would be pointless to discuss now. "When the Iranian government actually articulates a coherent set of needs, we can have a sensible conversation about what the U.S. should do," he said. "They have not done that."

In his open letter to the American people, Rouhani notes that "the path of sanctions and pressure has never been successful and will never be so in the future." Instead, he writes, "It is human discourse and action that produce results." That much is true. Rouhani should try leading by example.

Eli Lake is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering national security and foreign policy. He was the senior national security correspondent for the Daily Beast and covered national security and intelligence for The Washington Times, the New York Sun and UPJ.

OPINION

Trump again reticent to defer to experts

By AARON BLAKE
The Washington Post

Over the past 24 hours or so, President Donald Trump has signaled a desire to reopen the American economy despite the accelerating spread of coronavirus. He's suggested that he might reverse strict measures instituted over the past week-plus sooner rather than later.

And on Monday night, he indicated that he won't necessarily be dissuaded from that course by doctors.

At the daily White House press briefing, Trump repeatedly alluded to the idea that the United States needs to avoid letting the coronavirus destroy the economy and suggested that the virus could be dealt with at the same time that certain parts of the economy are restarted.

"We're going to be opening our country up for business, because our country was meant to be open," Trump said. He added at another point that he thought he would be opening things up in weeks rather than months.

Trump repeatedly said that the United States "can do two things at one time." He added that certain "parts of our country are very lightly effected" and named states with comparatively few cases.

Perhaps Trump's most illustrative comments, though, came when he was asked whether this was something that the medical professionals around him had signed off on. Trump said he consulted Sunday night, and Deborah Birx, a member of the task force who was at the briefing, offering comments somewhat critical of Trump. "I'm not sure," she said.

But he suggested that what the doctors want might be too onerous.

"If it were up to the doctors, they may say: 'Let's keep it shut down. Let's shut down the entire world' — because, again, you're up to almost 150 countries [with coronavirus cases] — so let's shut down the entire world. And when we shut it down, that would be wonderful. And let's keep it shut for a couple of years," Trump said, adding, "You know, you can't do that. And you can't do that with a country — especially the No. 1 economy in the world, by far."

Pressed on why, Trump said because "it causes bigger problems than the original."

Trump was asked again whether any of the doctors on his team had endorsed this approach, and he said they hadn't.

"Not endorsed. We talked together, and I think they're OK with it, and I'm OK with it," Trump said. "But this could be a much bigger problem. This could create a much bigger problem than the problem that you start off with."

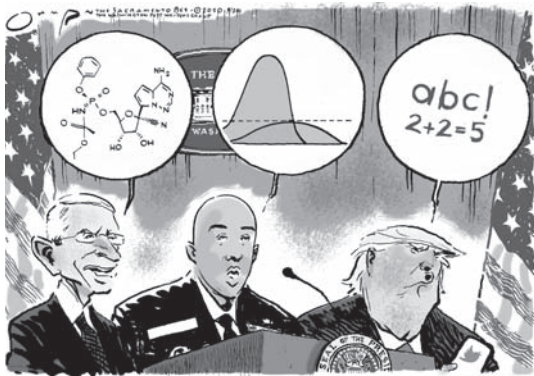
Another revealing exchange on this point came when Birx was asked about Trump's claim that he thought the doctors "were OK with it." Birx declined to directly respond.

"What the president has asked to do is to assemble all the data and give him our best medical recommendation based on all the data," Birx said. "That's what he's asked us to do."

When Birx was pressed on whether she'd be OK with reopening business as usual after the current 15-day period ends a week from now, she said, "I don't like to — I will never speculate on data. I will have to see the data to really understand."

Pressed on whether he'll take Fauci's recommendation on continuing restrictions, Trump was again noncommittal: "I would certainly — he's very important to me, and we'll be listening to him. I'll be listening to Deborah, who you just spoke to. I'll be listening to other experts. We have a lot of people that are very good at this. And ultimately, it's a balancing act."

To a large extent, Trump is right. Every



president has to take the advice of the experts around him and make his own decisions about areas in which he may not be an expert. But Trump has consistently offered a much more optimistic tone on the coronavirus than those same experts. And the strict measures used to contain coronavirus have been hailed — including by Trump — as necessary to prevent a public health crisis in which hospitals are overwhelmed with patients and the system breaks down.

In other words, there is significant reason to believe Trump may not fully appreciate the scope of the potential fallout, especially given his repeated comments downplaying the threat before that posture was abandoned a week ago.

Trump from the start has signaled that

he's as much or more concerned about the stock market and the economy, and the economy is a legitimate concern. What Monday's briefing drove home, though, is that Trump won't necessarily be deferring to his medical professionals when he makes that life-or-death decision. And to hear the lack of expressed support from Birx and Trump's carefully worded comments about how Fauci feels really says it all when it comes to who's backing this move.

Trump's comments about how doctors would want to "shut down the entire world" also suggest Trump's long-standing skepticism of experts certainly applies here.

Aaron Blake covers national politics for The Washington Post and writes regularly for the blog The Fix.

Impeachment hurt Trump's response to coronavirus

By HENRY OLSEN
The Washington Post

President Donald Trump has been roundly criticized for allegedly failing to prepare for the coronavirus crisis before it arrived in the United States. Those critics conveniently overlook something else that could have been distracting the president's attention during that crucial period: impeachment.

It seems forever ago, but Trump's impeachment was the major story in January and early February — the same time that disease was forcing China to lock down cities. Despite the near certainty that Republicans would not vote to convict the president, Democrats and most of the major media were almost entirely focused on impeachment. As a result, the White House was focused on addressing this threat to its survival, not on preparing for a threat from China that might never even materialize.

Trump's efforts to prepare the nation for this pandemic have been far from perfect, but the one thing the president did do to stop the virus's spread to the United States during that period — stopping air travel from China — was heavily criticized. Even former Vice President Joe Biden criticized the president's ban as "hysterical xenophobia." At the time, partisan vituperation had reached a fever pitch because of impeachment. Given that impeachment managers were regularly calling Trump a king or incipient dictator, a more forceful response

We entered a crisis that demanded national unity as a fractured and bitter people. It didn't have to be that way, but more than three years of a refusal to accept that Trump had fairly won the election made it so.

against the virus in January or early February likely wouldn't have gone over well. The effort to remove the president from today had the Democrats gotten their way. Imagine if Republicans had buckled under the pressure and backed the Democratic move to subpoena witnesses. The Senate would have spent most of February interviewing witnesses in depositions and probably fighting in court to force recalcitrant witnesses to testify. It's extremely unlikely that the matter would have been over by the end of the month, yet the markets started to decline on Feb. 24 as it became clear that Europe and the United States would not avoid the virus's spread. Would the House Democrats have suspended their attempt to remove the president at such a crucial time, or would they have redoubled their efforts instead?

Impeachment's lingering sting is damaging the country even today. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and the president have not spoken during this crisis, nor will they. Their hatred is deep and mutual, and impeachment made their breach irreparable.

The fact is that four years of irrational Trump hatred has brought us to the point where any action he takes is subject to criticism. Had he acted decisively in February when he had time, many surely would have accused him of manufacturing a crisis to distract the public from impeachment. Now that we are suffering from that month's relative inaction, he is attacked for failing to act in advance. Damned if he does, damned if he doesn't.

This latter point gets overlooked in the discussion over Trump's purported failures. No European leader stockpiled COVID-19 tests or ordered ventilators and masks in preparation for the worst. Yes, Trump might have played down the crisis in rhetoric, but when it comes to actual policy, the sainted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prepared his country no better than Trump prepared the United States. The rational analyst sees these facts and notes that it is extraordinarily difficult for politicians to foresee an event unprecedented in modern times and act accordingly. But Trump-phobia, of which impeachment was only the most obvious

symptom, prevents too many from seeing the obvious even now.

This must end if we are to get through the present crisis. The #Resistance has made "not my president" its slogan for years. Well, like it or not, he is the president, and barring death or incapacitation will remain so for the crisis's duration. Criticizing Trump's actions is appropriate, but the hyper-partisanship that views any act that he could possibly take as presumptively tainted and wrong must end if we are to come together as one nation and fight this battle together.

The failed impeachment effort, however, has made this highly unlikely. People who just a month ago had been whipped into a frenzy over Trump's supposed dictatorial tendencies will find it hard to suddenly be willing to trust him as the crisis demands a degree of federal action not seen since the 1930s and 1940s. We entered a crisis that demanded national unity as a fractured and bitter people. It didn't have to be that way, but more than three years of a refusal to accept that Trump had fairly won the election — a period of willful denial that culminated in impeachment — made it so.

Impeachment advocates once implored Trump defenders to put "country over party." Now that the country is ready under assault, it's imperative that they heed their own advice.

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

SCOREBOARD/NFL

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Deals

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League
BOSTON REDSOX — Acquired C Johnny Peralta from Chicago Cubs.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Selected the contract of LHP Ryan Satcher from Salt Lake Bees (PCL). Designated RHP Taylor Cole for assignment.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with S Chris Banjo and DL Jonathan Bullard on one-year contracts.
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Re-signed CB Torry Miller.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Released K Stephen Gostkowski.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Agreed to terms with S D.J. Swearingen on a one-year contract.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Re-signed DL Ronald Blair to a one-year contract.
WASHINGTON REDSKINS — Re-signed DT Caleb Brantley, Re-signed S Sean Davis and TE Logan Thomas. Released CB Breon Borders, CB Dee Delaney, CB Cody Sensabaugh, CB Kayvon Webster and S Montae Nicholson. Released DB Kayvon Webster.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Signed G Connor Ingram to a three-year contract.

U.S. SOCCER FEDERATION — Named William Whitman, chief executive officer and secretary general, effective March 30.

COLLEGE
BROWN UNIVERSITY — Announced the resignation of women's basketball head coach Sarah Behn.
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA — Announced the addition of Jordan Orlovsky, Peter Davila, Bobby Johnson II and Nick Brack to the football coaching staff.

Pro football

NFL calendar

April 17 — Deadline for restricted free agents to sign offer sheets.
April 23-25 — NFL Draft, Las Vegas.
May 15, 2020 — Spring owners meeting in Marina del Rey, California.
late July — Training camps open.
Aug. 6 — Hall of Fame game, Canton, Ohio.
Aug. 8 — Hall of Fame inductions, Canton, Ohio.
Sept. 5 — Final roster cutdown to 53.
Sept. 10 — Kickoff game to open regular season.
Sept. 13 — First full regular-season schedule.

Pro baseball

MLB calendar

TBA — Opening day, active rosters reduced to 26 players.
June 10-12 — Owners meeting, New York.
June 10-12 — Amateur draft, Omaha, Neb.
June 13-14 — Chicago Cubs vs. St. Louis is at London.
June 15 — International amateur signing period opens.
June 17 — International amateur signing period closes.
July 10 — Deadline for drafted players to accept free-agent offers, who have exhausted college eligibility.
July 14 — All-Star Game at Los Angeles.
July 16 — Hall of Fame induction, Cooperstown, N.Y.
July 31 — Last day during the season to trade players.
Aug. 13 — New York Yankees vs. Chicago White Sox at Davenport, Iowa.
Aug. 13 — Boston Red Sox vs. Baltimore at Williamsport, Pa.
Sept. 2 — Last day to be contracted to an organization and be eligible for post-season roster.
Sept. 1 — Active rosters expand to 28 players.
Sept. 29-30 — Wild-card games.
Oct. 20 — World Series starts.
October TBA — Trading resumes, day after World Series.
November TBA — Deadline for teams to make qualifying offers to their eligible free agents with no-trade clause for free agent fifth day after World Series.
November TBA — Deadline for free agents to accept qualifying offers, 15th day after World Series.
Dec. 2 — Last day for teams to offer 2021 contracts to unsigned players on their 40-man rosters.

Panthers make more moves at QB

Carolina adds XFL's Walker, trades Allen

By STEVE REED
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Panthers are making more changes at quarterback.

Carolina has agreed to terms on a two-year contract with former XFL quarterback P.J. Walker of the Houston Roughnecks, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity Monday because the moves have not been announced by the team since the players have yet to pass physicals.

The decision to add Walker prompted the Panthers to trade Kyle Allen to the Redskins, according to a person with knowledge of the move. That deal also had not been announced. Allen went 5-7 as a starter last season with 23 turnovers and 17 touchdown passes.

The Panthers also announced Monday the previously reported signings of three unrestricted free agents — linebacker Tahir Whitehead from the Raiders, defensive end Stephen Weatherly from the Vikings and offensive lineman John Miller from the Bengals.

The Panthers have made major changes to their QB room.

Teddy Bridgewater agreed to a three-year, \$63 million contract

last week to replace Cam Newton, who was given permission by the team to seek a trade. If Newton isn't traded, the team is expected to release him and free up \$19 million under the salary cap.

So far the Panthers haven't officially announced they've signed Bridgewater — or released Newton, the 2015 MVP.

However, after Bridgewater posted on Twitter what appeared to be a photo of him signing a contract, Newton followed by posting on Instagram a video of himself working out late Monday night saying, "I'm hungry now. Hungrier. I'm unemployed. ... you want me to cry? I'm just gonna work."

With Allen gone and Newton on the way out, the only returning QB is Will Grier, a third-round pick who went 0-2 as a starter as a rookie.

Walker joined the Panthers on the first day that XFL players were allowed to sign with NFL teams.

Both Walker and Whitehead played at Temple under new Panthers coach Matt Rhule.

The 25-year-old Walker was one of the MVPs of the XFL and a leading of stars of the XFL and a leading MVP candidate, throwing for 1,338 yards with 15 touchdown passes and four interceptions while leading the Roughnecks to a 5-0 record before the league canceled its season because of the coronavirus outbreak.



MATT PATTERSON/AP

Quarterback P.J. Walker, one of the stars of the XFL and a leading MVP candidate, agreed to a contract with the Carolina Panthers.

While playing under Rhule at Temple, Walker threw for 10,668 yards in four seasons with 74 touchdowns and 44 interceptions. He has spent parts of the past three seasons on the Colts practice squad, but has never played in a regular-season game in the NFL.

Whitehead is a more proven

player. He's played 125 games with 87 starts and has 633 tackles and five interceptions. He has started 63 games over the past four seasons with the Lions and Raiders. Whitehead had 108 tackles for the Raiders last year.

He could help mitigate the loss of linebacker Luke Kuechly, who retired earlier this offseason.

Briefs

Cowboys C Frederick retires, cites play

Associated Press

Travis Frederick said he thought he played well at center for the Dallas Cowboys after returning from a nerve disorder that sidelined him for an entire season.

The 2016 All-Pro made it clear Monday it wasn't good enough. Frederick retired from the NFL at 29, saying he "could no longer perform at the highest level" even though he went to his fifth Pro Bowl in his only season after recovering from Guillain-Barre syndrome.

"Each day, I faced a struggle: I could no longer perform at my highest level," Frederick wrote in a long statement posted on Twitter and released by the team. "Playing 'well' is not what I expect of myself and not what my teammates deserve. Because of this, I know my days as a football player are done."

A first-round pick seven years ago, Frederick missed all of 2018 after getting diagnosed with the auto-immune disease during training camp.

"I spent much of that year thinking about both the past and future," Frederick said. "I realized how fortunate I was to play a game I'm living. I realized how fortunate I was to make friends

and become teammates with some great men. Most of all, I realized the importance of my family and how much I want to be there for their peaks and valleys as they were for me."

Giants reach deals with RB Lewis, WR Coleman

The New York Giants have reached agreements on one-year contracts with running back Dion Lewis and wide receiver Corey Coleman.

Lewis spent the past two seasons with the Tennessee Titans. He was released earlier this month in a salary-cap move. Playing behind Derrick Henry, he carried 54 times for 209 yards.

Previously, Lewis played three seasons in New England and his first two with Philadelphia. Lewis has rushed for 2,310 yards and 11 touchdowns and caught 172 passes for 1,281 yards and seven scores in his seven seasons.

Coleman missed all of 2019 with a knee injury sustained in training camp. He was a 2016 first-round draft choice by the Cleveland Browns, who traded him to the Giants in October 2018 and played in eight games with one start.

Seahawks acquire CB Dunbar from Redskins

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks have finally addressed one of their defensive needs. No, it had nothing to do Jaden VanOrnum or the pass rush.

Seattle landed some needed depth in the secondary by acquiring cornerback Quinton Dunbar from the Washington Redskins for a fifth-round pick Monday, according to a person with knowledge of the move.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced. ESPN first reported the trade.

The move could end up being another trade steal for John Schneider and the Seahawks as they attempt to upgrade the secondary. Seattle had a need for cornerback depth and Dunbar should instantly jump into the competition as a potential starter.

Dunbar had a career-best four interceptions last season for the Redskins. He has started 17 of the past 18 games he's played for Washington. He missed five games last season with a hamstring injury and made it clear he wanted to play somewhere other

than Washington for the upcoming season.

In other NFL news:

■ The Patriots said goodbye to another longtime staple of their two-decade run of championships, releasing kicker and franchise-leading scorer Stephen Gostkowski.

The three-time Super Bowl champion has spent his entire 14-year career in New England.

Meanwhile, Brian Hoyer is returning to the Patriots for a third time.

In Hoyer, the Patriots add a veteran quarterback who is familiar with their system. The 34-year-old began his career as Tom Brady's backup in 2009 and has spent time with seven NFL teams during his 11-year career.

■ Case Keenum officially signed his three-year, \$18 million contract Tuesday with the Cleveland Browns, who are bringing him in to help mentor Baker Mayfield while also giving new coach Kevin Stefanski a security blanket in case things don't go as planned.

■ Cornerback Jimmy Smith has signed a one-year contract with the Ravens, who kept their secondary intact by extending his stay in Baltimore to a full decade.



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OLYMPICS

Timeline of the debate to postpone the games

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — How the debate over postponing the 2020 Tokyo Olympics changed this year during the coronavirus outbreak:

Jan. 11: "We are aware of the reports on the outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan. As it stands, the WHO (World Health Organization) have indicated that the Chinese authorities have confirmed that SARS and MERS Coronavirus have been ruled out, and that there is no convincing evidence of human to human transmission." — IOC statement about an Olympic boxing qualifying tournament scheduled in Wuhan.

Feb. 15: "Certainly the advice we've received externally from the WHO is that there's no case for any contingency plans or canceling the games or moving the games." — John Coates, head of IOC inspection team for 2020 Olympics, at a news conference in Tokyo.

Feb. 18: "Way too far away" (to advise on changing Tokyo Olympics plans). — WHO emergencies program director Mike Ryan.

Feb. 25: "You could certainly go to two months out if you had to" (before postponing the July 24-Aug. 9 games). — IOC senior member Dick Pound in an interview with the Associated Press.

"This is the new war and you have to face it. In and around that time, I'd say folks are going to have to ask, 'Is this under sufficient control that we can be confident about going to Tokyo, or not?' — Pound. "All indications are at this stage that it will be business as usual. So keep focused on your sport and be sure that the IOC is not going to send you into a pandemic situation." — Pound.

"It's a big, big, big decision and you just can't take it all the way you have reliable facts on which to base it. There's so many moving parts, so many countries and different seasons, and competitive seasons, and television seasons. You can't just say, 'We'll do it in October' — Pound.

Feb. 27: "For the time being, the situation of the coronavirus infection is, admittedly, difficult to predict, but we will take measures such that we'll have a safe Olympic and Paralympic Games." — Tokyo organizing committee CEO Toshio Muto.

Feb. 28: "The preparations ... are continuing with a view to having successful Olympic Games this summer in Tokyo and to reassure the athletes and to encourage them to go ahead full steam with regard to their training and their preparations for what we expect to be very successful Olympic Games." — IOC president Thomas Bach in a call with Japanese media.

"I'm not ready to add fuel to the flames of speculation there in any way. It is about now, not about speculation." — Bach.

March 3: "We are going to have the games on the 24th of July." — IOC spokesman Mark Adams after first day of an executive board meeting.

March 4: "Neither the word cancellation nor the word postponement was even mentioned." — Bach at news conference after the board meeting.

"I will be as clear as I can in any way of such kind of mere speculations." — Bach, when asked if WHO declaring a pandemic would change the IOC's position. (WHO declared a pandemic on March 11)

March 12: "I would say maybe they postpone it for a year, but that's better than having empty stadiums all over the place." — US President Donald Trump at the White House.

March 13: "The IOC and the organizing committee are not considering cancellation or a postponement — absolutely not at all." — Japan's Olympic minister Seiko Hashimoto at a news conference in Tokyo.

March 13: "All Lausanne staff will work from home starting Monday, March 16 until further notice, with the exception of some essential functions. It has been decided to close The Olympic Museum from

Monday ... for two weeks." — IOC statement.

March 17: "The IOC remains fully committed to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and with more than four months to go before the games, there is no need for any drastic decisions at this stage, and any speculation at this moment would be counterproductive." — IOC statement after conference calls with Olympic sports governing bodies.

"The IOC encourages all athletes to continue to prepare for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 as best they can." — IOC statement.

"I think the IOC insisting this will move ahead, with such conviction, is insensitive and irresponsible given the state of humanity." — IOC member Hayley Wickenheiser, a four-time Olympic ice hockey gold medalist.

March 18: "We will keep acting in a responsible way in the interests of the athletes." — Bach after a conference call with athletes representing national Olympic committees.

"I'm sorry Mr Bach, but this is tone deaf. The instinct to keep safe (not to mention obey government instructions to lock down) is not compatible with athletes training, travel and focus that a booming Olympics demands of athletes, spectators organizers etc. Keep them safe. Call it off." — Matthew Pinsent, 4-time Olympic gold medalist in rowing.

March 19: "We are not living in a bubble or on another planet. Of course we are considering different scenarios." — Bach in interview with New York Times.

"We also have seen athletes are very creative to bridge this gap for training at home and other training methods. It is a unique exceptional situation, which requires exceptional solutions." — Bach to the New York Times.

"The most infuriating part of this whole thing is it feels like the IOC is going to do what they want, regardless of what the athletes think." — Sandi Morris, Olympic silver medalist in pole vault.

March 20: "We'd concur with what we say we need more expert advice than we have today. And we need not have to make a decision. The games are four months from now." — Susanne Lyons, chairman of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee.

March 22: "There is a dramatic increase in cases and new outbreaks of COVID-19 in different countries on different continents. This led the (board) to the conclusion that the IOC needs to take the next step in its scenario-planning." — IOC statement after an emergency board meeting.

"The IOC will, in full coordination and partnership with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Japanese authorities and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, start detailed discussions to complete its assessment of the rapid development of the worldwide health situation and its impact on the Olympic Games, including the scenario of postponement. The IOC is confident that it will have finalised these discussions within the next few days." — IOC statement.

March 23: "It's clear the games can't be held in July." — Ian Chesterman, leader of Australia's Olympic team, telling athletes to prepare for the Tokyo Games in 2021.

"The games are not going to start on July 24, that much I know." — IOC member Dick Pound, in an interview with USA Today.

March 24: "President Bach said he will agree '100%', and we agreed to hold the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in the summer of 2021 at the latest. In order to hold the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in a complete form as a proof of a victory by human beings against the coronavirus infections." — Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

— Associated Press



Joe C. Hwang/AP

A countdown display for the Olympics is shown Tuesday in Tokyo. Later in the day, the games were postponed until 2021 because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Games: Olympics delayed a year

FROM BACK PAGE

Other Olympics — 1916, 1940 and 1944 — have been canceled because of war, but none have ever been postponed for any reason, let alone a renegade virus that has accounted for more than 375,000 cases worldwide, with numbers growing exponentially. The Tokyo Games will still be called the 2020 Olympics, even though they will be held in 2021.

"The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could stand as a beacon of hope," the IOC said in a statement.

The decision offers a sense of relief for athletes, who no longer have to press forward with training under near-impossible conditions, unsure of when, exactly, they need to be ready — and for what.

"Thankful to finally have some clarity regarding The Olympic Games. A huge decision but I think the right one for sure," British sprinter Adam Gemili said on Twitter. "Time to regain, look ahead each other during this difficult period and go again when the time is right!"

One reason the IOC took longer to make the decision was because it wanted to figure out logistics. It will be a daunting challenge. Many of the arenas, stadiums and hotels are under contract for a games held from July 24-Aug. 7. Remaking those arrangements is doable, but will come at a cost. Tokyo has already spent a reported \$28 billion to stage the games.

There's also the matter of the international sports schedule. Virtually all 33 sports on the Olympic program have key events, including world championships, on the docket for 2021. Perhaps the best example of what a disruption this can cause would come from track. Famous Hayward Field at the University of Oregon was rebuilt and expanded at a cost of \$200 million to hold next year's world championships.

Now that event could be postponed, canceled or see its stature greatly diminished if it's run within months of a rescheduled Olympics.

"A lot can happen in one year, so we have to think about what we have to do," said Toshio Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee. "The decision came upon us all of a sudden."

But for weeks, it was becoming increasingly clear that pressing on with a July 24 starting date was no longer a choice.

Virtually every sport across the globe has suspended play in the wake of the pandemic. The worldwide economy is faltering and people are increasingly being told it's not safe to congregate in large groups or, in some cases, even to leave their houses. Gyms are closed across America. Holding Olympic trials in a matter of months was becoming a virtual impossibility.

Olympic committees in Canada and Australia were saying they either would not, or could not, send a team to Tokyo in July. World Athletics and the three biggest sports in the United States — swimming, track and gymnastics — were calling for a postponement.

As recently as Sunday, the IOC was saying it would take up to four weeks to reach a decision. Four weeks ended up being two days.

The decision came only a few hours after local organizers said the torch relay would start as planned on Thursday. It was expected to start in northeastern Fukushima prefecture, but with no torch, no torchbearers and no public.

Those plans also changed. The flame will be stored and displayed in Fukushima. Like everything else in the Olympic world, its next move will be determined at a later date.

Wade and Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo.

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Dayton duo: Toppin, Grant sweep awards

Sophomore forward is named AP's top men's player, Grant is coach of the year

By **AARON BEARD**
Associated Press

Obi Toppin and Anthony Grant spent the season transforming Dayton from an unranked team that wasn't even picked to win its conference into one of the nation's best, complete with the most wins in program history.

The pair behind the Flyers' remarkable rise claimed The Associated Press' top individual honors: Toppin is the men's college basketball player of the year and Grant is the coach of the year.

"Our team is very appreciative of what we accomplished," Toppin told the AP, "just because we made history at our school."

Indeed, Dayton (29-2) went from being picked to finish third in the Atlantic 10 to No. 3 in the final Top 25 poll, matching the program's best poll finish, first set in 1956. The Flyers went unbeaten in league play and in road games, leaving them positioned to claim a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament that was canceled amid concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

Now Dayton has its first winners of the AP's top awards, joining St. Joseph's in 2004 (with Jameer Nelson and coach Phil Martelli) as the only programs in the past 40 seasons to claim both in the same year.

"In the 31 games that we played, our guys did a heck of a job of playing consistent and taking advantage of the opportunities that were in front of us," Grant said. "What we did accomplish in the shortened season is something I think that hopefully will be remembered."

The 6-foot-9, 220-pound Toppin followed his unanimous selection

DID YOU KNOW?

Dayton's Obi Toppin appeared on 34 of 65 ballots from Top 25 voters, followed by Iowa junior Luke Garza with 24 votes, Fellow All-Americans Markus Howard of Marquette, Payton Pritchard of Oregon and Udoka Azubuike of Kansas split the remaining votes.

SOURCE: Associated Press

to the AP All-America first team by appearing on 34 of 65 ballots from Top 25 voters, who submitted ballots after the cancellation of the NCAA Tournament.

Iowa junior Luka Garza was second in the balloting, earning 24 votes after averaging 23.9 points and 9.8 rebounds for the Hawkeyes. Fellow All-Americans Markus Howard of Marquette, Payton Pritchard of Oregon and Udoka Azubuike of Kansas split the remaining votes.

It wasn't that long ago that Toppin was a 6-foot-2 high school junior who had never dunked in a game and then a senior lacking any Division I scholarship offers, sending him to prep school before ending up at Dayton. But he has blossomed as a redshirt sophomore into an efficient scorer who made regular appearances on TV highlight reels with high-flying dunks.

He averaged 20 points and 7.5 rebounds while shooting 63% from the field and 39% from three-point range, leading a season-long surge by the Flyers that rallied a community shaken by devastating tornadoes and a deadly mass shooting in the past year.

Dayton grabbed national attention early, taking Kansas to



JOHN MINICILLA/AP

Dayton sophomore forward Obi Toppin dunks against North Texas on Dec. 17. Toppin, who averaged 31.7 points and 7.5 rebounds this season, was named the AP men's player of the year.

overtime in a loss in the Maui Invitational championship game. The Flyers' only other loss came in December on a buzzer-beating three-pointer in overtime against Colorado. Dayton had won 20 straight games when the season ended.

"Honestly, if you had asked me, I swear we could've won a national championship and our team

was so ready to play in the tournament," Toppin said. "We were so locked in. But because of this virus, things happened. It's just going to be a what-if for the rest of our lives, but it's something we're going to have to live with."

Grant earned 30 of 65 votes to claim the AP coaching award in his third season at his alma mater: Baylor's Scott Drew, who

guided the Bears to a 23-game winning streak and five weeks at No. 1, was second with 13 votes.

San Diego State's Brian Dutcher was third with 12 votes after leading the Aztecs to a 26-0 start, followed by Florida State's Leonard Hamilton — who earned six votes after leading the Seminoles to their first-ever Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season title.

Oregon's Ionescu unanimous choice for top women's player

By **DOUG FEINBERG**
Associated Press

Sabrina Ionescu capped off an unprecedented college career by entering an exclusive club.

Oregon's star guard was the unanimous choice Monday as The Associated Press women's basketball player of the year, receiving all 30 votes from the national media panel that selects the Top 25 each week during the season. Since the award was first given in 1995, the only other player to receive all the votes is former UConn star Breanna Stewart.

"That's pretty crazy. Someone I look up to and have a good relationship with," Ionescu said. "To be in that class with her is an honor."

Ionescu, who was only the eighth player to earn AP All-American honors three times, shattered the NCAA career triple-double mark and became the first player in college history to have 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 1,000 assists.

"Sabrina is a transcendent basketball player," Oregon head coach Kelly Graves said. "There's really nothing that she couldn't do on the court. She was the ultimate leader."

Ionescu came back for her senior season, saying

she had unfinished business and hopes of winning an NCAA title. She averaged 17.5 points, 9.1 assists and 8.6 rebounds this season as well as having eight of her 26 career triple-doubles.

She helped the Ducks win the Pac-12 regular season and tournament titles. The native of Walnut Creek, Calif., was honored as the conference's most outstanding player of the tournament and regular season.

Ionescu guided Oregon to a 31-2 mark this season, which ended prematurely with the cancellation of the NCAA Tournament because of the pandemic.

"I have enjoyed everything that I did this year," said Ionescu during the Pac-12 Tournament. "I never second-guess my choice."

"Sabrina is a basketball player, period. She was this year's Zion and a household name," AP voter Deb Antonelli said.

While Ionescu was a unanimous choice, South Carolina coach Dawn Staley received 20 votes from the panel to win the AP's coach of the year award for the first time. Northwestern coach Joe McKown was second with five votes, Graves garnered four ballots and North Carolina State's Wes Moore received one.



CHRIS PIETSCH/AP

Oregon guard Sabrina Ionescu celebrates a three-pointer in a Jan. 16 game against Stanford. She was the unanimous choice Monday as The Associated Press women's basketball player of the year.

SPORTS



AP player of the year
Dayton's Toppin takes top honor
College basketball, Page 23



After weeks of speculation, Tokyo Games off until 2021

BY EDDIE PELLIS, STEPHEN WADE
AND MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — The IOC announced a first-of-its-kind postponement of the Summer Olympics on Tuesday, bowing to the realities of a coronavirus pandemic that is shutting down daily life around the globe and making planning for a massive worldwide gathering in July a virtual impossibility.

The International Olympic Committee said the Tokyo Games "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community."



Abe

It was an announcement seen as all but a certainty as pressure mounted from nervous athletes, sports organizations and national Olympic committees — all confronting the reality that training and qualifying schedules, to say nothing of international anti-doping protocols, had been ruptured beyond repair.

Four-time Olympic hockey champion Hayley Wickenheiser, the first IOC member to criticize the body's reluctance to postpone, called it the "message athletes deserved to hear."

"To all the athletes: take a breath, regroup, take care of yourself and your families. Your time will come," she wrote on Twitter.

IOC President Thomas Bach and Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe met via phone Tuesday morning, and they, along with a handful of executives from the IOC and Japan's organizing committee, agreed to make the call.

SEE GAMES ON PAGE 22



JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BOTT, KEYSTONE, TOP, AND JAC C. HONG, BOTTOM/AP

Top: The Olympic rings are displayed at the entrance of the International Olympic Committee headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. **Bottom:** People take pictures with the Olympic Flame during a ceremony Tuesday in Fukushima City, Japan. The torch relay was also postponed, but the torch will be stored and displayed in Fukushima.

TO OUR READERS

As the sports world pauses to join the rest of the world in fighting the coronavirus pandemic, you will see fewer sports stories in Stars and Stripes. We look forward to resuming our normal coverage when the leagues and governing bodies determine it is safe for athletes and fans to return to competition.

